NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI®

University of Alberta

Creole English and Standard English in the Formative Years of Schooling: A Journey into a St. Lucian Classroom

by

Claudia J. Fevrier

©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2008.

Library and
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45427-5
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45427-5

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

ABSTRACT

Every St. Lucian primary school classroom is diverse in many respects: culture, ethnicity, language, cognitive ability, interest, and socio-economic status. The language situation in St. Lucia is complex and, thus, presents a challenge to both students and teachers in primary schools. In particular, students whose first language is a Creole (basilectal-Creole English) are faced with problems in learning St. Lucian expected/Standard English. These students often lack rich opportunities that facilitate their learning to read, write, and speak a standard variety of English upon entering school. The research question was: What teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences are provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language?

This study is a qualitative case study grounded in constructivism, social constructivism and postcolonialism. Data were gathered three days a week over a period of approximately three months in a St. Lucian third-grade classroom during the language arts period. The research participants were the classroom teacher and three Creole speaking male students. Data were collected through field notes, my reflective research journal, informal conversations, interviews, and the examination of documents.

The major findings of the study were: 1) the grade-three teacher lacked strategies and resources for teaching the basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students in her classroom, and 2) there was no adequate or appropriate intervention program to help the basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students succeed in English language and literacy learning. Recommendations focus on a need for professional development to help St

Lucian teachers deal with the realities of today's classrooms, and the need for improved resources and support from the Ministry of Education. There is also a need to develop culturally relevant pedagogy in St Lucian elementary classrooms.

Dedication

To my parents, Yvonne and Robert, who lovingly nurtured my early literacy learning, and whose faith in God and love for people have set the standards of excellence to which I aspired.

To my husband, Raf, who offered me constant support and encouragement in my scholarly endeavours.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the most pleasant opportunities that can be afforded me is a formal page to express my sincere gratitude and recognition to all those who helped me, in one way or another, knowingly or unknowingly, to accomplish this vitally important research study.

Firstly, in the Name of Jesus, I can never thank the Almighty God, my Heavenly Father, enough for the blessings He bestows upon me each day of my life. It is only with His love, guidance, and grace that I grew in wisdom, courage, and strength to undertake this task. Truly, our God is awesome! Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your great and infinite love for me.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge the guidance Dr. Joyce Bainbridge provided to me throughout this journey. Her ability to steer me through some of the most difficult moments of my study has been truly appreciated. She is the best mentor and friend anyone can have. Indeed, I am blessed to have her as my supervisor. Dr. Bainbridge, thank you so very much for everything.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Ms. Diane Cyr (Program Manager) and the Board of the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program/Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) for granting me the opportunity to realize my dream. I will forever be grateful for everything you have done for me. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank Dr. Jill McClay and Dr. Carol Leroy whose deep and insightful reading helped to enhance this study considerably. I greatly appreciate your hard work. Thank you both very much.

Thank you to Dr. Ingrid Johnston whose warm smiles and kind words of encouragement always lifted my spirits. These ingredients complement her wealth of knowledge.
I am also grateful to Dr. Lynette Shultz for serving on my examining committee, and to Dr. Cynthia Chambers for leaving her own busy schedule behind to travel to the University of Alberta to be my external examiner. Thank you both very much for your invaluable contributions to my dissertation.

I would now like to thank the participants of this study, the teacher, Ms. Joseph, and her three students, Peter, James, and John, for welcoming me into their classroom. I also thank the principal for granting me permission to conduct this study in the school. Thank you for your generosity.

Thank you to each member of my very large family for your understanding, patience, and cooperation from the very beginning of this journey onwards. Without your immense love and care, this study would not have become a reality. I could not have wished for a better family.

In particular, my heartfelt thanks to my husband, Raf, who was one of my harshest critics while being one of my most loving, caring, and strongest supporters. Thank you so much, Raf, for always being there for me.

I also thank the office staff of the Department of Elementary Education for helping to make my stay at the University of Alberta so worthwhile.

Lastly, but by no means least, I want to thank my wonderful friend, Dr. Rochelle Skogen, who has redefined the word "friendship," especially when it was most needed. Thank you, Rochelle, for being my friend.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY........................... 1

- Personal Reflections.. 1
- Statement of the Research Problem and Background Information......... 8
- Purpose of the Study.. 13
- Research Questions.. 15
- Significance of the Study... 15
- Overview of the Research Project... 19
- Limitations and Delimitations... 20
- Organization of the Dissertation... 20

CHAPTER TWO—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE............................ 22

- Language History of St. Lucia... 22
- Literacy History of St. Lucia... 24
- Definitions.. 26
  - Standard English.. 26
  - Creole Language.. 27
- Differences between Caribbean Creole English and Standard American English... 28
- St. Lucia's Current Sociolinguistic Situation............................ 31
- Postcolonial Theory.. 36
- Definition of Literacy... 39
- Cultural Diversity in the Classroom: Educational, Political, Language, and Family-Structure Issues...................................... 43
- The Place of Creole and Standard English in Language and Literacy Instruction within the St. Lucian Primary Education System.... 48
- Models for Effective Literacy Instruction................................ 57
- Policy Goal from the St. Lucian Ministry of Education.................. 62
- Social Constructivist Theory.. 64
- Summary.. 65

CHAPTER THREE—RESEARCH APPROACH.................................. 67

- Theoretical Framework.. 67
  - Constructivism.. 67
- Qualitative Research Method... 70
  - Case Study.. 72
- The Research Setting.. 74
  - Teacher Participant: Ms. Joseph...................................... 75
  - Student Participants... 77
  - Selection of Participants.. 78
  - Profile of Student Participants... 85

Peter... 85
James.. 87
John... 89
Data Collection Process.. 90
Researcher as Videocamera... 92
Researcher as Playgoer.. 93
Researcher as Evaluator... 94
Researcher as Subjective Inquirer............................... 95
Researcher as Insider.. 97
Interviews with Participants.. 99
Data Analysis and Interpretation Process.......................... 100
Ethical Considerations.. 103

CHAPTER FOUR—PRESENTATION OF THE DATA........................... 105

The Language and Literacy Context: The Classroom Environment......... 106
Ms. Joseph's Expressed Philosophy of Language and Literacy Instruction.. 117
Ms. Joseph's Perspectives on Language and Literacy Teaching Approaches and Learning Opportunities.......................... 125
Ms. Joseph's Final Reflections.. 146
Researcher's Observations of Ms. Joseph's Language and Literacy Instruction.. 148
Sample Lessons and Field Notes: Ms. Joseph's Language and Literacy Instruction.. 148
Researcher's Perspectives on Ms. Joseph's Oral Language Instruction.. 153
Researcher's Perspectives on Ms. Joseph's Literacy Instruction.. 158
The Students' Experiences with Language and Literacy Learning.......... 162
Peter... 163
Peter's Language and Literacy Experiences at Home........ 163
Peter's Language and Literacy Experiences in School....... 164
Peter's Interest, Attitude, and Self-Concept as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker of St. Lucian Standard English.......... 168
James.. 169
James' Language and Literacy Experiences at Home....... 169
James' Language and Literacy Experiences in School....... 170
James' Interest, Attitude, and Self-Concept as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker of St. Lucian Standard English......... 172
John... 174
John's Language and Literacy Experiences at Home........ 174
John's Language and Literacy Experiences in School....... 175
John's Interest, Attitude, and Self-Concept as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker of St. Lucian Standard English......... 177

Similarities: Peter, James, and John.................................... 179

CHAPTER FIVE—DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.. 181

Beginning with Myself.. 181
Findings.. 184
Support for Teachers.. 184
The Role of the Physical Environment.................................. 185
The Role of the Students' Text Books.................................. 189
The Role of Curriculum and the St. Lucian Ministry of Education.. 191
The Role of the Literacy Approaches Prevalent in the Classroom... 195
The Role of Oral Language Strategies in the Classroom.............. 201
The Role of Socio-Political Consciousness in the Classroom........ 205
Students' Interests, Attitudes, and Self-Concept in Learning English Language and Literacy.. 206
Recommendations for Classroom Practices.................................. 209
Recommendations for Further Research...................................... 213
Summary.. 215
Conclusion.. 216

REFERENCES... 218

APPENDICES... 228

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Pronunciation features of Caribbean Creole English (CCE) vs. Standard American English (SAE)...................... 28

Table 2.2: Syntactic features of Caribbean Creole English (CCE) vs. Standard American English (SAE).. 29

Table 2.3: Vocabulary features of Caribbean Creole English (CCE) vs. Standard American English (SAE)...................................... 30

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: A model of the St. Lucian Creole continuum………………………….. 33

Figure 4.1: Students working in a group……………………………………… 107

Figure 4.2: Classroom floor plan……………………………………………….. 109

Figure 4.3: Sample language arts chart (1)…………………………………….. 114

Figure 4.4: Sample language arts chart (2)……………………………………… 115

Figure 4.5: Ms. Joseph provides direct or explicit language
arts instruction…………………………………………………… 135

Figure 4.6: Ms. Joseph giving individual attention to a student (John) ………….. 149

Figure 4.7: Peter paying attention to something……………………………….. 167

Figure 4.8: James interacting with his peer…………………………………….. 172

Figure 4.9: John observing his peer's work……………………………………. 177

Figure 4.10: John sharpening his pencil……………………………………….. 178

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

> *To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.*
>
> bell hooks (1994, p. 13)

Personal Reflections

The idea asserted by bell hooks above resonates with my experiences and provides me with a helpful frame for the retelling of my lived stories. As I reflect on my experiences, I feel myself recalling essential moments in my family, the memory of which I retain from so long ago. I see myself, then, in our old wooden house at Derniere Riviere, a small community on the eastern side of the island of St. Lucia where I was born. This house was encircled by trees, some of which were like friends to me. Such was my intimacy with nature. I played in those trees whose branches were within my reach and took risks of climbing them as far as I could go. Those divine flowers in our front yard were so enthralling that they invited me ever so often to smell their aroma, which characterized the environment, as I conversed with them in my native tongue—English. My family and our house—with its bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen, and a yard, containing trees and flowers—comprised my first world. It was in this world I crawled, first stood up, took my first step and cried, uttered my first word, “Da-da,” and smiled. So, this is my family culture in which I grew up. It is my heritage and, as a result, I deeply appreciate it. This great sense of appreciation that I have for my own cultural background has, in turn, enabled me, a teacher and curriculum maker, to appreciate cultural heritage in the classrooms where I taught and learned.

I can recall how my siblings and I would feel when we knew that it was story time. We would sit on the floor of our living room just to tell, read, or listen to stories. What we enjoyed most was when dad came home early from work, on rainy days, especially, and joined mom in telling us wonderful stories (sometimes mom read stories to us) in the evening—fables, folktales and fairy tales. Mom and dad also related stories to us about their own childhood experiences. I cannot forget dad's favourite story, "Little Benjamin." Like Little Benjamin, dad grew up as an orphan with a grandmother who loved and cared for him. However, dad had to fend for himself at a tender age after his grandmother died. In doing so, dad encountered lots of obstacles in his life's path, some of which were overwhelming at times. Dad's stories about himself and Little Benjamin evoked much empathy in me; I always wished I was a character in those stories to help them feel wanted and to provide for them their necessities. What those stories did for me was to sensitize me towards meeting the needs of others, especially the needs of students who were entrusted to my care when I became a teacher.

Reflecting on my early experiences in school, I have fond memories of my mom, not so much my dad since he was the one working away from home, tenderly holding my hands when she first took me to formal school at the age of four. As we walked, she reminded me of what it meant to be in school, the way she expected me to conduct myself in class, among other things. My eyes sparkled with joy, confidence, and security. However, when we kissed each other goodbye, I wept.

There I was in a kindergarten class at the La Ressource Infant School socializing with my peers. It was not long before I noticed my class teacher. I began to see her do and say things to me that made me smile. I had lots of fun in my class: we recited classic

British nursery rhymes and played exciting games on the playground. I particularly liked the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill" and the game "Little Sally." Truly, there was hardly any time to miss mom any longer.

The things I learned in school became a part of my life. When I arrived at home from school, I chanted the nursery rhymes and played the games I learned in school. Interestingly, I made the ground my chalkboard, the sticks from the trees my chalk, and the trees and stones in the yard my students—I was a "teacher" then. Besides, I always had a good story to tell about my teacher, Miss Phillipa. My telling of stories about Miss Phillipa was like a reciprocal trade agreement; she also told pleasant stories about me. She enjoyed talking to mom and dad about me on Sundays after our church service. Those stories always warmed my heart and made me feel special. Remarkably, after greeting my teacher, my mom's first question to her was usually "How did Claudia behave in your class last week?"

According to the maxim, "Good things don't last forever." The following year, I was promoted to a grade-one class. When I entered my new class, I did not see a kind Miss Phillipa person leading our class. I kept searching but could not find one. In my littleness, I often wondered why my new teacher was ever so cruel to me and my classmates. Seemingly, the teacher wanted us to learn mathematics and to read and write just like the students in the higher grades. Consequently, she flogged us if we were unable to grasp the concepts she taught, creating the illusion that flogging itself was a teaching strategy. There were certain words which the teacher wrote on the blackboard at the beginning of her lesson that frightened me and my peers. For me, it was not so much the word "English" that frightened me but, rather, "mathematics." For several others, it was both English and mathematics. In addition, the teacher made certain remarks to my peers which intimidated them. For instance, in my class, there were lots of students whose first language was Creole French (otherwise known as Patois or Kwéyòl) and not English. For those students, life in the classroom was unbearable because they struggled to learn to read and write in English, which was not their native language. Consequently, the teacher viewed those students as failures and often criticized their talk. For example, whenever someone spoke Patois in the class, the teacher would say, "Child! Stop speaking that "kind" of language (meaning 'bad' language) in the class; speak properly" (meaning 'speak English').

Mom and dad were very concerned about the type of language my siblings and I spoke in our childhood. Although Patois was the language/dialect of the vast majority of people in our community and, in particular, the language that the majority of parents first spoke to their children, the language our parents first spoke to us was English, which was viewed by them as the superior language. Our parents forbade us to speak Patois because they thought that the speaking of Patois would affect our ability to learn to read and write English. Our home language situation was not an isolated case in St. Lucia. Frank (1993) sheds much light on this language situation:

> In their desire to find the key to success for their children, many parents have accepted the fallacy that a knowledge of Creole will keep their children back. So not only will many parents use English in the home in order that the children will learn it as their first language, they will punish their children if they catch them speaking Creole. This does not mean that the parents do not enjoy the language or regret having learned it, but just

> that they want to do what they understand to be best for their children. While the children might not learn to speak Creole from their parents, they will be exposed to it and pick it up as a second language. (p. 52)

My siblings and I grew up, then, as monolinguals of English. We learned to read and write at an early age. As children, we were considered privileged to be English speakers in our community.

However, as a young adult, being a monolingual English speaker in a community in which Patois was the language of the masses did not work well for me in certain situations: firstly, I can recall myself having to read and write letters for a cousin of ours who was corresponding with her daughter, a registered nurse in London. At first, mom was the one who took on the responsibility of reading and writing letters for our cousin who spoke mainly Patois. Nevertheless, mom passed on the responsibility to me when I became a young adult, thinking that, by then, I had learned to, at least, understand the Patois language and would be able to read my cousin's letters in English and translate for her, as well as write her oral Patois into English. Unfortunately, I dreaded those Sunday afternoons when I would spend quite a lot of time at the table, during my leisure with a pen and a writing pad trying my best to comprehend what cousin wanted me to write for her. Cousin usually began her letter by saying to me in Patois, "Di i mwen di kon sa…" (meaning, 'Tell her I said that…'). Oh, it was difficult for me to understand a lot of cousin's Patois expressions, so, I would often call on mom to translate them for me. Secondly, when I began my teaching career, I had great difficulty communicating with my students' parents who were monolingual Patois speakers. It was at that point in my life that I made a conscious effort to speak Patois/Creole French.

How did my experiences at home, school, and in the wider community help to shape me as a teacher and curriculum maker? I became, first, an elementary school teacher. I chose teaching as my profession partly because I may have been influenced by my older sisters and a brother who were teachers and partly because I had the desire to become a teacher from childhood. The two distinct experiences I had in those two early and memorable classes and my experiences within my family and community contributed significantly to the teaching philosophy I espouse—one that mirrors a balanced approach to teaching. That is, I believe that teaching involves creating a milieu that is conducive to learning—one that cares for and respects students' individuality with respect to their culture and linguistic identity (native language), and makes provision for self-reflection, knowing and meeting, in particular, the language and literacy needs of individual learners. Indeed, bell hooks' (1994) view which emphasizes the necessity for a suitable learning condition is consistent with my philosophy of teaching. To reiterate, "To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin."

Additionally, from the perspective of an ethic of caring, Ayers (2001) makes an invaluable point which informs me as a teacher and curriculum maker. He states,

> It is to choose the rocky road of change. It is to move beyond the world as we find it with its conventional patterns and its received wisdom in pursuit of a world and a reality that could be, but is not yet. (p. 23)

Further, from his experiences in teaching marginalized groups of students, he declares that teachers' self-awareness and knowledge of their students are both part of the intellectual challenge of teaching (p. 37). Consequently, he accentuates the need for teachers to understand their students' diverse backgrounds as a way to allow them their full humanity.

In my journey as a teacher, from a novice to an experienced teacher, I have exercised a degree of sensitivity toward my students' needs. Not only have I been concerned about the cognitive domain of teaching but also the affective domain. For example, during my early years of teaching, I came across some students who, in comparison to other students in my class, were disadvantaged. Those were the poorer students who spoke Patois exclusively at home and would sometimes come to school without having breakfast or without lunch. I was concerned about those students' well-being, so, I made time to listen to the stories they wanted to share with me and supported them whenever necessary. It was not that I had learned about any theoretical orientations per se which would have influenced my interactions with my students; simply, I felt the need to listen to them as they expressed themselves. I did that in spite of the limited time I had to do what seemed to be the most important thing from the standpoint of my principal, that is, to cover the syllabus for examination purposes. Hence, my relationships with some of the students whom I taught at elementary school (the students were all emotionally disturbed; they were from poorer families and were native Patois speakers) are examples of what it means to make a difference in students' lives spiritually, emotionally, socially, and academically. Truly, "How we understand and negotiate a curriculum of diversity is intimately connected with the life stories of each person and the intermingling of storied lives in the space of the classroom" (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003, p. 347-348).

As a teacher, I have gained a lot of experiences in teaching language and literacy. I taught students at a range of educational levels who exhibited various levels of proficiency in the English language as well as those who spoke Patois exclusively. For example, I taught at the infant, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. I also taught at a special school (for the blind and visually impaired). At the tertiary level, I taught student teachers at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia for four years and then for three years at the University of Alberta. In terms of my academic pursuits, I have a certificate in teaching, a Diploma of Education; a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Linguistics; two Master of Education degrees (M.Ed., & MPhil) in curriculum and reading, respectively. Studying and teaching at those various levels of education have enabled me to acquire a wide range of experiences in the teaching and learning of language and literacy.

However, education is not static; there is always room for improvement. I, therefore, became interested in broadening my knowledge and understanding in the teaching of language and literacy through research, for example, so as to help raise the standards of teaching and learning in St. Lucian schools. Having acquired a wide range of experiences as a teacher and student, and having developed a keen interest in language and literacy education, I felt equipped to conduct this research study in the field of language and literacy within a classroom setting on the island of St. Lucia.

Statement of the Research Problem and Background Information

Based on my experiences as a St. Lucian teacher, I can safely say that all St. Lucian schools are diverse in several respects. Every classroom contains students who differ through a combination of culture, ethnicity, language, cognitive ability, interest, gender, and socio-economic background. In considering this situation, a pertinent question one can ask is, “How successful have the schools been in meeting the diverse language and literacy needs of students?”

On the one hand, when one views the academic success of two St. Lucian scholars—Sir Arthur Lewis who won a Nobel Prize for Economics and the Hon. Derek Walcott for Literature (the only two Nobel Laureates within the Eastern Caribbean countries)—one can argue that the St. Lucian educational system has been highly successful in educating students. On the other hand, a close examination of the education system enables me to argue that those schools have not been successful in educating all students. Research studies conducted in St. Lucian schools by two St. Lucian educators (Isaac, 1986; Simmons-McDonald, 2002) who lecture at the University of the West Indies reveal that quite a number of Creole-speaking students are performing below their grade level in reading. Moreover, I conducted a research study (Fevrier, 2004) on an eight-year-old child (third grade) in a St. Lucian primary school and found that the child was reading two levels below grade level in English. Although I cannot generalize any findings from one child, I can say that this is not uncommon. Based on these research findings, one can conclude, however, that the St. Lucian educational system has not been successful in meeting, in particular, the language and reading needs of all students.

Thus, it becomes necessary to provide some background on the context of the St. Lucian education system. To date, all St. Lucian schools are examination-oriented. The typical elementary school has been one in which teachers teach large classes of thirty-five students or more, who are diverse in many respects. Despite the fact that many students enter school as Creole speakers, English is used exclusively as the language of instruction, often without any special assistance to support these students as they learn English. However, some Creole-speaking children seem to have a stronger predisposition to learn the St. Lucian English language than others. Consequently, teachers often complain that some of their students appear to be unable to learn the English language. The situation becomes more problematic when certain teachers, from my observations, exclaim in a disgusted manner, "I don't know what else to do with this child (or these children)!" or, when they vehemently display negative attitudes toward the students who speak Creole French or basilectal-Creole English, and have low expectations of them. Basilectal-Creole English is a variety of the St. Lucian English language. It contains primarily English lexicon (words) but supplemented with some Patois/Creole French items, and is grammatically quite similar to Patois in the sense that many of the constructions are calqued directly on (or direct translations of) Patois constructions (Garrett, 2000). Clearly, these attitudes are not helpful to the students. Perhaps, these teachers need more education in the teaching of language in order to help their students overcome their difficulties in language arts learning. Pransky and Bailey (2002) state,

> The cultural background of many at-risk children may limit their ability to fully participate in classroom activities. It is not that they come to school ill-prepared or culturally deprived but rather that they simply have not had some or even many of the same experiences as their mainstream classmates. (p. 373-374)

Within the St. Lucian educational system, many educators turn a blind eye to the fact that many students' native language is Creole. Consequently, they disregard the use of Creole language during instruction, while they uphold the exclusive use of St. Lucian Standard English. This situation is highlighted by a St. Lucian scholar, Frank (1993), who declares, "The policy of the Ministry of Education has been to treat Creole as though it did not exist, to design programs based on the assumption that all school children can speak English" (p. 52). Following Frank's (1993) line of thinking, Doll (1996) posits: "In practice, schools unrealistically tend toward treating learners as though they were substantially alike, whereas they actually vary beyond our wildest imaginings" (p. 58).

In viewing student diversity or individual differences and needs, Heilman, Blair, and Rupley (1998) posit that "students at any given grade level show great differences in their literacy skills and abilities. Some of them read and write at a level considerably below their grade level placement, while others have advanced literacy capabilities" (p. 454). However, the authors provide a means to overcome the disparity among learners. They emphasize the need for differentiated instruction in schools. Other scholars such as Teale and Yokota (2000) underscore Heilman et al. (1998) ideas regarding individual differences and needs. They enunciate that some children are able to grasp concepts almost on their own, with only minimal instruction, while others need systematic attention in learning. These authors' ideas do illuminate the disparity that exists among St. Lucian learners and account, in part, for the problem that has long been in existence in the St. Lucian elementary school system.

Doll (1996) argues that "consideration of learners' abilities inevitably causes us to focus on pupils as individuals" (p. 58). Unfortunately, this practice seldom occurs within the St. Lucian school system. In fact, differentiated instruction has not been a common practice in schools. In spite of the varying abilities and interests that exist in the various classes in St. Lucia, all students are taught using the same method and in the same amount of time. In fact, whole-class reading in which all students read in unison, using the same basal readers recommended for their grade level is quite commonplace in schools. Some students are able to cope with their textbook while others struggle and fall way behind their peers in reading. This situation worsens when the struggling readers move to a higher grade every academic year and the text becomes more difficult for them. Certainly, a variety of literature and the availability of a range of writing materials are essential in creating purposeful reading and writing experiences for children, which, in turn, could entice them into the world of readers and writers. Unfortunately, many primary school classrooms in St. Lucia do not offer students a wide range of children's literature to help them become good readers, nor do they offer opportunities to become writers through the writing process approach.

Further, the language arts, especially, reading, writing, and speaking are taught separately. Each of these strands fits into discrete time periods on the timetable in the majority of the elementary schools. Burns, Roe, and Ross (1999) do not consider this method of language arts learning to be very effective and have, therefore, offered this suggestion: "Instead of separating the language arts into discrete time periods, teachers should integrate instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. When children learn language as an integrated whole, they are likely to view reading and writing as meaningful events" (p. 359).

Additionally, during my years of teaching in various primary school classrooms in St. Lucia, I observed that the vast majority of students who had great difficulty learning to speak, read, and write Standard English (as revealed by their performances in class and in the island-wide/standardized examinations) were those whose native language was either Creole French (Patois) or basilectal-Creole English. Longitudinal studies of language development in school-age children establish that there is a strong relationship between oral language development and success at literacy (Loban, 1976; Juel, 1988). The teaching of English language and literacy is therefore the issue that is the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose for conducting this study was to gain a better understanding of the teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences that were provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected/Standard English language. For about three centuries, St. Lucian Creole French (Patois/ Kwéyòl) was the language of the masses, that is, it was the language that was most widely and most commonly used in St. Lucia. Garrett (2000) points out that, "Kwéyòl is showing many signs of change due to contact with English, which has been used as an official language since early in the nineteenth century" (p. 68). Consequently, Garrett is of the opinion that Creole English "is replacing Kwéyòl as the most widely and most commonly spoken vernacular in St. Lucia" (p. 69). This language change, therefore, had implications for me in selecting my participants for the study. It made more sense to select Creole-English speakers (particularly, basilectal-Creole-English speakers) rather than Creole French speakers because Creole English is now the dominant vernacular.

I chose a grade-three class over any other grade level for the following reasons: the St. Lucian education system comprises two basic levels of education: infant (k-grade 2) and primary (grades 3-6). Grade three can be considered the mid-point of the infant-primary/elementary education system. From a more analytical standpoint, grade three marks the end of the infant school and, at the same time, the beginning of the primary school system; more specifically, the beginning of the Common Entrance Examination period which ends in grade six and is designed to determine students' competence to enter secondary schools. This means that third-grade students are half way in attaining an education within the elementary school system, success in which would allow them entry into secondary schools. If these students have not acquired the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes in language arts learning by the end of the first three years of their school life, they can be deemed at risk of failing the very important Common Entrance Examination in grade six, and therefore be disadvantaged throughout their lives.

Allington (1998) states that by third grade, the majority of students in the American education system have moved from word-by-word reading to fluent reading, and that 10-15% have difficulty learning to identify words. Consequently, their reading is slowed. The reality of such a situation raises a critical question for St. Lucian educators to consider: What measures are put in place to help third-grade students who are struggling to learn the St. Lucian English language overcome their learning barriers so that by the end of third grade they are well equipped for fourth grade? As Cunningham and Allington (2003) assert, "If children come to second or third grade and have not been successful in learning to read and write, the task of getting them to engage in real reading and writing becomes more difficult" (p. 9). The goal, then, is for all students to read and write fluently by the time they reach third grade. Notably, by the time students reach fourth grade, they will be called upon to do more reading of content material in areas across the curriculum. Difficulties in reading and writing become difficulties in achieving success in school.

Third grade, then, is crucial in the sense that it becomes the window through which St. Lucian teachers can identify at-risk learners so that they can make a conscious effort to provide learning opportunities/experiences for those learners in order to bridge the gap between their current level of ability and the grade level competencies they are expected to achieve according to standards set by the school curriculum. The aim is to ensure that students will be successful in their Common Entrance Examination and, ultimately, they will be in a better position to contribute significantly to society. It is on this basis that I selected a third-grade classroom in which to conduct this study.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study was: What teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences are provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language?

Significance of the Study

It is worth noting that teaching language arts means facilitating children's development in speaking, reading, writing, listening, and visual language (viewing and representing). The language arts are essential to everyday life and central to all learning. Through these language arts strands, children come to understand the world in which they live. To be a successful teacher of language and literacy, one needs to understand how children's language and literacy develop and how to help children themselves become fluent, flexible, proficient users of both the oral and written forms of language. In particular, this understanding is paramount when teaching St. Lucian Creole-English-speaking children to effectively use St. Lucian Standard English or what might be called "St. Lucian expected English." Considering the statement of the problem, it was important for me to interrogate the understanding which currently directs language arts instruction in St. Lucian primary schools.

Craig (1983), in his work on language education in the Caribbean throughout his years as an outstanding Caribbean educator and linguist, constantly reminds us of the increasing calls there have been for change in the aims of language education for non-standard English speakers, and for a consequent reform of the curricula and organization of schools. He views such changes in light of the continuing problem of teaching English to non-standard speakers in the Caribbean. Millar (1995), in viewing the structure of the St. Lucian education system, recognizes the negative impact of failure on students' self-esteem. He asserts, "The negative impact of failure at an early age on an individual's self-esteem can be irreparable." Millar (1995) writes, "Our education system is begging for innovation. Let us respond, for 'a mind is a terrible thing to waste'" (p. 13).

The study I report in this dissertation is timely. In 1983, Craig lamented the inadequacy of the body of literature in existence on the teaching of Standard English to non-standard speakers. Thus, he argued that there was "need for an embodiment of general principles of teaching standard English to non-standard speakers into a varied set of language education materials" (p. 72). Craig's argument points to the need for more research in the area of teaching Standard English to Creole speakers. In my review of the literature, I found very little empirical research specific to St. Lucia on issues related to primary school Creole-speaking students learning to read and write English. I came across only one St. Lucian researcher who has made a significant contribution in this respect: Simmons-McDonald (1988) investigated the learning of English by primary school students of St. Lucian French-Creole background. More recently, Simmons-McDonald (2002) examined the use of St. Lucian Creole as a medium of instruction in the development of literacy in English in St. Lucian primary schools. This researcher has developed a body of literature on teaching St. Lucian Standard English to non-standard speakers in St. Lucian schools. McDonald's research findings have potential usefulness for pedagogical practice in St. Lucia. In response to Craig's (1983) plea, I hope my study will add to the body of literature in this area.

At the end of this dissertation, I make a number of recommendations about language arts learning and teaching which seem viable within the St. Lucian primary school context. Furthermore, in recognition of the language arts challenges prevalent in schools and the importance of language arts instruction for the socio-economic growth and development of the St. Lucian populace, I will endeavor to make a significant contribution to the advancement of the teaching of language arts in St. Lucian primary schools.

In the St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports' (2000) Educational Sector Development Plan 2000-2005 and Beyond, Mr. Mario

Michel—Minister of Education—stated: "The intended aim of the plan is to create a learning society that places premium value on learning so that the outcome will be learners who are able to express themselves verbally and are functionally literate." The findings of my study have the potential to assist learners in advancing beyond the Ministry's simple notion of functional literacy. I believe that education must enable students to take control of their personal lives and to make significant contributions to their immediate communities and the wider society. Students need to be multi-literate individuals; they need to be critical readers and thinkers so that they can have control over their life trajectories. Luke and Freebody (1999) write that "teaching and learning just isn't a matter of skill acquisition or knowledge transmission or natural growth. It's about building identities and cultures, communities and institutions" (p. 1), which must take into account the development of higher order thinking skills, for example, critical thinking skills. Consequently, "'failure' at literacy isn't about individual skill deficits—it's about access and apprenticeship into institutions and resources, discourses and texts" (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 1).

Rorty (1982) posits that as human beings we have only two tasks to undertake. That is, we need to take responsibility for our own continuing growth, and to assist in solving the problems in our communities. This research study has, in fact, contributed significantly to my personal growth in language arts education, in that it has enabled me to become more passionate about language arts instruction in the primary school. Such a passion, which I consider a very powerful force, among other things, has placed me in a better position to contribute to solving the language and literacy challenges in my country, St. Lucia. Consequently, this study has the potential to be used as a vehicle to educate stakeholders responsible for bringing about an improvement in language arts instruction in St. Lucian primary schools for the good of the St. Lucian populace.

Overview of the Research Project

This research study explored the ways through which three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students were taught St. Lucian expected/Standard English in one third-grade classroom in St. Lucia. This study was considered a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998), rooted in the constructivist paradigm for the purpose of data collection and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Jordan (2005), "qualitative research methods are best suited to capturing multiple realities and describing social processes" (p. 206). This study also embraced postcolonialism as a lens through which the research problem was viewed, and social constructivism as the foundation for the teaching of language and literacy instruction.

The data were collected between September and December, 2005. During that period, I visited the research setting (classroom) three days a week during the language arts period and employed multiple methods of data collection that were interactive and humanistic (Creswell, 2003). Those data collection methods comprised field notes from observations, reflective journals, informal conversations, interviews, and examination of documents. I used one of Patton's (2002) analysis strategies to analyze the data. In particular, I used inductive analysis and creative synthesis to identify categories and discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships in the field notes, interview transcripts, and the documents I examined. I presented the descriptive information/accounts, themes, or categories that cut across the data (Merriam, 1998). Lastly, I interpreted the findings of the data based on the review of the literature, the theoretical framework, and my professional and research experiences, knowledge, and skills.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was delimited to one research question which addressed the teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences that were provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language. This study was also delimited to one school and one third-grade classroom in which the research was conducted. Further, this study was delimited to three basilectal-Creole-English students, as opposed to mesolectal-Creole-English (nearer to St. Lucian Standard English) students or acrolectal-English (St. Lucian Standard English) students, and their classroom teacher who were the participants of this study.

This study was limited to the extent that the teacher was able to articulate her knowledge and understanding of her teaching of language and literacy to the three basilectal-Creole-English students. The study was also limited to the extent that these three students were able to share their language and literacy learning experiences with me. Finally, this study was limited by the extent that I was able to observe the research setting (three days a week), conduct the individual interviews, and interpret the data shared by the participants.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction to the study which constitutes personal reflections, statement of the research problem and background information, purpose of the study, the research question, significance of the study, an overview of the research project, limitations and delimitations of the study, and organization of the dissertation. Chapter two constitutes the review of the literature. This chapter examines the historical to present-day linguistic and literacy landscapes of the island of St. Lucia, with special emphasis on the primary education system. It also explores language and literacy instruction through the lens of cultural diversity in the primary school classroom, and the theories that underpin such instruction. Chapter three focuses on the research approach and embodies the theoretical framework which guided this research project. Chapter four deals with the presentation of the data. Chapter five, being the final chapter of this dissertation, is concerned with the discussion of the findings, which includes conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Teaching and learning are rooted in and are dependent upon a common language between teacher and student. Language is rooted in and is an aspect of culture. Culture is nothing, more nor less, than the shared ways that groups of people have created to use and define their environment. All people, every group of people on the face of the earth, have created culture. Therefore, they have also created language, which is included in culture. Children all over the world learn to speak the language of their cultural group at about the age of two. Teaching and learning is a world-wide phenomenon. Teaching and learning—the transmission of cultural heritage—is as old as the human family. All cultures are intellectually complicated and cognitively demanding.

Asa Hilliard (2002, p. 89)

Language, literacy, and culture are concepts within the St. Lucian educational context that are at the heart of this dissertation. It therefore makes sense to begin the synthesis of this literature review by presenting some historical information on the language and cultural history of St. Lucia.

Language History of St. Lucia

St. Lucia is one of the Windward Islands of the Caribbean, situated south of Martinique, north of St. Vincent, and west of Barbados. It has a surface area of 238 square miles. In 1990 the population stood at approximately 120,000—more than 90% of whom were of African ancestry (Carrington, 1990). Today, the population is about 160,000. Migration and a lowering of the mortality rate are the factors that have contributed to this rapid recent growth.

St. Lucia was first settled by Arawak Indians around 200 A.D. However, by 800, the Arawak culture had been superseded by that of the Caribs. These early Amerindians called the island 'Iouanalao' and 'Hewanorra,' meaning 'island of the iguanas.' The language of the Caribs (who remained on the island for a much longer period of time than the Arawaks) has not been documented. However, it can be assumed that the Caribs' language was, for the most part in later times, Creole French (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). The Caribs of St. Lucia seemed to have been wiped out of the island by the early 1750s. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), report that, "Most of the Caribs seem to have withdrawn to the more northerly islands or into the interior of the island. We hear no more about them" (p. 57).

Although European explorers had visited the island of St. Lucia in the 1500s, the first (failed) attempt at colonization occurred by the English in 1605. The French attempted to settle the island in 1651 and were more successful. However, in 1722, a disastrous expedition from England (via Barbados) landed on the northern side of Castries, the capital of St. Lucia, to try their luck again. They were driven out of the island once more, this time, by the French themselves. Nevertheless, the French and British jointly agreed to evacuate the island so as to neutralize it, but the French settlers stayed on to work the estates they had acquired. In the 1730s, planting of coffee and cocoa in St. Lucia was extended by settlers—predominantly French—and their slaves from Martinique, St. Vincent, and Grenada. Thus, there were many well-established French settlers on the island by the mid 18th century.

In 1762, the British under Admiral Rodney, having subdued Martinique, forced the French in St. Lucia to surrender and a British administration remained in place until 1763 when the island reverted to France, independent of Martinique. In 1765, the first sugar estate was established. The vast majority of slaves who were exported to the island to work on the sugar plantations did not come directly from Africa (unlike other

Caribbean islands such as Martinique and Haiti). Instead, they came from Martinique and Haiti, and brought with them their Creole-French language (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

Garrett (2000) records that St. Lucia changed hands between the competing powers—England and France—fourteen times. England finally emerged victorious over France in 1803 and France ceded the island to England. England's possession of the island was formalized by treaty in 1814. However, England was more interested in merely controlling the island rather than in settling it, so the French colonists were able to stay on even after English dominion had been established. Consequently, the French cultural and language influence continued to dominate the island's colonial life in the following decades.

In 1823, English became the official language of St. Lucia but its use was restricted to high-level official domains. Not until well into the twentieth century did English become more widespread and this was mainly due to the increasing availability of formal education. During that time, Creole French continued to survive and became the language of the masses. After a century and a half as a British colony and then for a short period as an associated state, St. Lucia became a fully independent member of the Commonwealth in 1979.

Literacy History of St. Lucia

"The history of reading and writing is referred to as literacy history" (Farris, Fuhler, & Walther, 2004, p. 48). A historical background is essential to every field of study and the literacy field is no exception. "While we look forward to new literacy instructional ideas and the plethora of technological innovations related to literacy"

(Farris et al., 2004, p. 48), unfortunately, "our forward rush is often achieved without fully assimilating the insight of the present or integrating the richness of our past" (Stahl & King, 2001, p. 40). According to Farris et al., literacy history can "lay down the background of reading and writing and provide a new lens for us to look through" (p. 49). Doll (1996) warns of the dangers involved when an ahistorical attitude is adopted in the curriculum field. Doll (1996) states, "One of the characteristics of failed curriculum plans and programs has been, as we have seen, a disregard of history" (p. 16). The following, therefore, is an account of the literacy history of St. Lucia.

Popular education was initiated in St. Lucia by the French Catholic Church in the 19th century (Frank, 1993). The Catholic educated class spoke French, while the working class people spoke Creole French. The British government promoted the teaching of English and officially banned the French language from official use on January 3, 1838. This meant a decline in the use of French by the Catholic educated class. However, ordinary St. Lucian people continued to speak Creole French (Gachet, 1975). During this period, compulsory education in St. Lucia came about, first through Protestant schools in the early 19th century, and then later through Catholic and government run schools.

Today there are still strong denominational ties with specific schools, but the government exercises final control. Some Catholic schools are gender oriented, for example, the Ave Maria Primary School for girls and the St. Aloysius R. C. (Roman Catholic) Boys Primary School for boys. Over the years, changes in methods of literacy instruction have taken place including adopting the phonics approach; the whole-word approach; the use of basal readers; the reading readiness approach; the use of standardized reading tests; drill and practice instruction in reading and writing; and more recently, balanced instruction and alternative assessment. To date, both the European and the American education systems have, to a certain degree, influenced the St. Lucian primary education system. This last statement leads me to pay particular attention to two languages—Standard English and Creole English—that coexist in St. Lucia and what this language situation means to the St. Lucian primary education system. First, what is meant by Standard English?

Definitions

Standard English

For a succinct definition of 'Standard English,' I draw on the work of Crystal (1995) who posits that Standard English "is the variety of English which carries most prestige within a country. 'Prestige' is a social concept, whereby some people have high standing in the eyes of others, whether this derives from social class, material success, political strength, popular acclaim, or educational background. The English that these people choose to use will, by this very fact, become the standard within their community" (p. 110). Here, the notion of 'expected English' is presupposed. Undoubtedly, it is this 'expected' variety of English that students of English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL) are taught when receiving formal instruction. It is the variety of English that Creole English students, for example, St. Lucian Creole-English students, are taught when receiving formal instruction. "Command of English is to a large extent an index of educational achievement and high social status" (Winford, 1991, p. 568). This situation is true of St. Lucia.

Moreover, the term *Standard English* often refers to grammar and vocabulary but not to pronunciation (accent) or formality of style. Consequently, 'I haven't got any' is a sentence of Standard English, no matter how it is pronounced, while, 'I ain't got none' is not a sentence of Standard English, consisting as it does of forms used in many non-standard dialects. Trudgill and Hannah (1985) note that Standard English includes informal as well as formal styles. For example, in an informal style, the rules of contraction are used more often, and many words are used that do not occur in the formal style.

Creole Language

According to Fromkin and Rodman (1993), a Creole is a pidgin language adopted by a community as its native tongue and learned by children as their first language. A pidgin is a simple but rule-governed language developed for communication among speakers of mutually unintelligible languages (for example, English and African languages). Nero (1997a) postulates that "Creole languages emerged as a result of European-controlled plantation systems' bringing together Africans as slaves and other ethnic groups from Asia and Europe as indentured laborers" (p. 586). These languages comprise a combination of the phonology, syntax, and morphology of West African and other languages. With respect to the Creole English language, in particular, the largest contribution to its lexicon comes from British English, hence, the term Creole English (Nero, 2000). In short, Creole Englishes (as Nero puts it to indicate that there are varieties of Creole English within the Caribbean region itself) have their origin in British colonization, consequently, many of its features stem from English of the colonial period, and beyond.

Differences between Caribbean Creole English and Standard American English

It is interesting, also, to note, some of the main differences that exist between Caribbean Creole English (CCE) and Standard American English (SAE), in terms of pronunciation (Table 2.1), syntax (Table 2.2), and vocabulary (Table 2.3).

Table 2.1

Pronunciation Features of Caribbean Creole English (CCE) vs. Standard American English (SAE)[1]

Feature	Caribbean Creole English		Standard American English	
Initial consonants	(t)	ting	(th)	thing
	(tr)	tree	(thr)	three
	(d)	dat	(dh)	that
Final consonants	(n)	sometin'	(ng)	something
	(n)	don'	(n't)	don't
	(s)	bes'	(st)	best
Vowels	(ih)	dih	(e)	the
	(e)	mek	(a)	make
	final (a)	fadda	(er)	father

[1] Adapted from Nero (2000)

Table 2.2

Syntactic Features of Caribbean Creole English (CCE) vs. Standard American English (SAE)[2]

Syntactic CCE feature	CCE form	Corresponding SAE form
Zero copula if predicate is an adjective	He strong	He is strong
Zero inflection for subject-verb agreement	She tell me everything	She tells me everything
Zero inflection for tense	Yesterday, I wash the clothes	Yesterday, I washed the clothes
Zero use of passive structure	Eggs selling today	Eggs are being sold today
Use of does (unstressed) to indicate habitual action with any person or number	He does go to church every week	He goes to church every week
Zero inflection for plurals if plurality already indicated	My father work two job	My father works two jobs
Zero marking for possession	Paul house	Paul's house
A noun functions as a verb	That boy tief (thief) the books	That boy stole the books

---

[2] Adapted from Nero (2000).

12

Table 2.3

Vocabulary Features of Caribbean Creole English (CCE) vs. Standard American English (SAE)[3]

Vocabulary Item	Meaning in CCE	Meaning in SAE
hand	Part of the body from the shoulders to the fingers	Part of the body from the wrist to the fingers
foot	Part of the body from the thigh to the toes	Part of the body from the ankle to the toes
tea	Any hot beverage (may include coffee)	Specific beverage made from tea leaves
a next	Another (e.g., I want a next one)	Another

[3] Adapted from Nero (2000).

In relation to Table 2.2, Roberts (1988) is of the opinion that the verb is the chief syntactic feature of Caribbean Creole English (CCE). His basis for his argument is that there is flexibility in the syntactic structure of Creole English (unlike Standard English), thus, a word which is normally a noun in Standard English can function as a verb in Creole English. For example, in the sentence *That boy tief the books*, the word *tief* (meaning *thief*) is normally a noun, but it functions as a verb (meaning *stole*). Moreover, adjectives are subcategories of verbs in CCE (for example, *He strong*), and that CCE verbs are not subject to the rigid inflection rules of Standard English. Evidently, not only are there differences between CCE and SAE, but also marked similarities. Like allophones of a phoneme, "CCE bears a sufficient resemblance to a standard form of English, as shown in [Table 2.2], that the similarities often mask the real differences between the two" (Nero, 2000, p. 489). This raises a profound question: Why is such the case?

St. Lucia's Current Sociolinguistic Situation

From a holistic standpoint, St. Lucia's sociolinguistic situation in this postcolonial era is different from that of many of the other Caribbean islands (say, Barbados), even if St. Lucia's Creole English bears features of Caribbean Creole English along a Creole continuum, as described above. As documented by Carrington (1990), there were two languages that coexisted in St. Lucia—English and a Lesser Antillean French-lexified Creole (otherwise known as Patois/Patwa/Kwéyòl). After 1823, English was the official language of the country (and it still is today), and was the native language of a small minority of the population. This means that Creole French or Kwéyòl was the native language of the vast majority of the population. At that time, a large proportion of the population acquired English through schooling. From the wider Caribbean perspective, very few West Indians (or Caribbean nationals) learned the official language as a native tongue. "In St. Lucia, Kwéyòl is a language wholly distinct both lexically and grammatically from English, and St. Lucians often characterize their society as 'bilingual'" (Garrett, 2000, p. 63).

However, the language situation in St. Lucia has changed tremendously over the years. Garrett (2000) posits that in St. Lucia, two closely interrelated processes of language change have been occurring. The Creole French that has been spoken in St. Lucia for about three centuries has been undergoing attrition. Creole French is showing many signs of change because of its contact with English. Carrington (1990) states that contact between English and Creole French has been producing a variety of English-lexicon speech which may be termed "post-creole English-lexicon St. Lucian" (p. 71). This speech variety is widespread as a street language of the city of Castries, and is more common than English itself in the daily life of most St. Lucians. In fact, for most people who claim to speak English, it is objectively this post-creole variety that they command. When Carrington talks about a post-creole English lexicon that is widespread in St. Lucia, he is referring to the basilectal-Creole-English language which is grammatically quite similar to Patois (Garrett, 2000).

Garrett (2000) sheds more light on Carrington's (1990) notion of the emergence of a post-creole English lexicon in St. Lucia: since St. Lucia is becoming increasingly anglicized, Creole French/Kwéyòl is no longer being reproduced across the generations as it once was. Many (if not most) St. Lucian children are now acquiring an emergent St. Lucian English-lexicon vernacular as their first language, instead of Creole French/ Kwéyòl. This linguistic change in St. Lucia is due to "the fact that many children today are not acquiring Kwéyòl from older members of their families and communities" (Garrett, p. 69). Instead they are exposed to the English of popular media and popular culture. In its most creole-like or basilectal form, Creole English, in spite of its English lexicon, has more in common grammatically with Creole French than with Standard English (Garrett, 2000), despite the fact that Creole French cannot be taken to be a variety of the English language (Frank, 1993, p. 39), for reasons already advanced—it is "wholly distinct both lexically and grammatically from English" (Garrett, 2000, p. 63). St. Lucian sociolinguistic researcher Isaac (1986) proposes a model of a Creole continuum that depicts St. Lucia's language situation. Figure 2.1 depicts a Creole continuum model which is an adaptation of Isaac's model. This model is useful to the study because it strategically situates basilectal-Creole English on the St. Lucian Creole continuum.

o1------------------------------2----------------------------3---4o

Creole French	Basilectal Creole/Vernacular English	Mesolectal Creole/Vernacular English	Standard English
	(most creole-like/ conservative Creole variety—nearer to Creole French/ Patois)	(the intermediate/ midrange creolised varieties—nearer to Standard English)	

Figure 2.1. A model of the St. Lucian Creole continuum

What is also noteworthy, with respect to Figure 2.1 above, is that the Creole continuum is redefined to accommodate the Creole French variety still present in St. Lucia. An additional point of interest is that although the vocabulary of the basilectal vernacular English of St. Lucia "is largely English [yet] the phonology, morphology and syntax of speech diverges sharply enough from standard English for fluent speakers to be unintelligible to English listeners" (Craig, 1983, p. 65).

Use of Standard English and Creole English in St. Lucia is related to factors such as, attitude, education, and social class. From my observations of St. Lucia's language situation, I perceive a strong correlation between urban provenance and acrolectal speech (the Standard English variety) or approximations, on the one hand, and on the other hand, between rural provenance and basilectal speech (the Creole English variety). Strangely enough, however, there is no clear-cut point of demarcation between the two ends, according to Nero (2000). The reason is that St. Lucians engage in what Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) refer to as acts of identity, whereby, they reveal through their language their personal identity and their ethnic solidarity and difference, as well. In other words, "particular creole features, and/or outright code-switching, may be used strategically by skilful speakers in formal settings to lend a flavour of local authenticity to their words, to evoke a sense of solidarity with their audience, etc." (Garrett, 2000, p. 67). The vast majority of St. Lucian English speakers utilize some form of Creole English for their day-to-day communication and in informal settings, revealing a bidirectional style shifting (in simple terms, code/language shift) along the continuum (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Conversely, in such a setting, there is a more or less gradual transition from the basilect at one end to the acrolect at the other end along the Creole continuum. The intermediate between the two ends is typically a range of mesolectal varieties (Garrett, 2000), as has been described. In a nutshell, speakers continually shift from one language variety to another.

The similarities between English and Creole English have the potential, somehow, to often mask the real differences between the two varieties of English (Creole and Standard), thereby, placing in the minds of those Creole English native speakers a certain perception of themselves as Standard English speakers. They, "therefore, live and migrate with the expectation that they will be perceived as English speaking" (Nero, 2000, p. 489).

This same partial resemblance to Standard English which has afforded Creole-English speakers a window through which to view themselves as English speakers, has at the same time, precluded Creole Englishes from attaining structural autonomy. Besides, the colonial legacy in St. Lucia and the Caribbean as a whole has allowed Creole Englishes to continue to be portrayed by both their speakers and outsiders as deformed versions of Standard English (Nero, 2000). In this regard, it is imperative that I acknowledge Roberts' (1988) invaluable input:

> The value system of colonial slave society created the belief that the Africans had no language. This belief, with its total vacuum of knowledge on the African side, left the West Indian with no alternative but to think of his language negatively in terms of English; hence, the terms "broken English," "bad English," etc. (p. 14)

Standard English was imposed as the official language in the Caribbean region through British colonization and is, therefore, preferred and used in formal domains such as school, church, business, government, and law (Nero, 2000), up to this current postcolonial era. However, "It is noteworthy that the Caribbean creole that has thus far been most successfully standardized and 'instrumentalized' (i.e. instituted as a language of literacy, instruction, official communication, etc.) is Papiamentu—a primarily Spanish-lexified Creole that co-exists with Dutch" (Garrett, 2000, p. 96).

It is important to note that a wide variety of Creole languages in the Caribbean region exists, apart from Creole English and Creole French. Those Caribbean Creole languages originated partly from European languages. Roberts (1988) explains further: "In the Caribbean as a whole, Creole languages are the result of contact between English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch ('languages of colonising people') and West African languages ('languages of a colonised people')" (p. 14). In comparing Creole English and the standard form with which it coexists, I must stress, from a sociolinguistic perspective, that both Creole English and Standard English are dialects of the English language, as revealed by Fromkin and Rodman (1993): "Every language is a composite of dialects" (p. 283). The two dialects are both viewed as languages, as well. This comparison is a representation of the other Creole language types.

Postcolonial Theory

A significant section of the review of the literature has been devoted to the writings of scholars who have demonstrated, according to Bush (2006), "the ways in which colonized subjects actively appropriated aspects of 'Western' culture and melded them into their own subordinated cultures, creating new, hybrid forms" (p. 133). An example is "the creation of creole languages" (p. 133), as in the case of St. Lucia's basilectal-Creole- English language. Of course, this hybrid language is deeply rooted in St. Lucia's colonial history, and is, therefore, situated in discourses of various oppositions such as traditional/modern, uneducated/educated, oral/literate, non-standard/standard, African/European, rural/urban, private/public (Garrett, 2000). In turn, these discourses are subsumed in postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is predominantly based on the work of Edward W. Said and Frantz Fanon (Young, 2001).

This is what Gandhi (1999) says in relation to postcolonial studies:

> Postcolonial studies has come to represent a confusing and often unpleasant babel of subaltern voices. ... Postcolonial studies has emerged both as a meeting point and battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories. While it has enabled a complex interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities, its uneasy incorporation of mutually antagonistic theories—such as Marxism and poststructuralism—confounds any

> uniformity of approach. As a consequence, there is little consensus regarding the proper content, scope and relevance of postcolonial studies. (p. 3)

Slemon (2001) also claims that there is no single post-colonial theory, simply because no one critic can possibly represent, or speak for, the post-colonial critical field—a field that is so broad and hotly contested. Young (2001) advances his argument in support of Slemon's claim: "Postcolonial theory involves multiple activities with a range of different priorities and positions; there would be a particular irony in assuming that it possesses a uniform theoretical framework given that it is in part characterized by a refusal of totalizing forms" (p. 64). In fact, "postcolonial theory is not even a theory in the strict sense of the term" (Young, 2001, p. 64), that is, "a set of assumptions or principles designed to explain phenomena" (Burns et al., 1999, p. 15). Rather, Young (2001) states:

> What [postcolonial theory] has done is to develop a set of conceptual resources. As in feminism, there is no single methodology which has to be adhered to: rather, there are shared political and psychological perceptions, together with specific social and cultural objectives, which draw on a common range of theories and employ a constellation of theoretical insights. (p. 64)

Looking at its development further, Young (2001) claims that in the past thirty years, postcolonial theory has developed sometimes as an idiosyncratic set of issues, debates and, increasingly, as an articulation of points of political intervention. Slemon

(2001) embellishes this construct by drawing on one of the most provocative areas of debate in the postcolonial theory field. He states:

> One of the most vexed areas of debate within the field of post-colonial theory has to do with the term that was first used in the 1950s and 1960s, the term "post-colonial" itself [a term that has been established in some form in the preceding sections]. The debate lies in two parts: debates about the "post," and debates about "colonialism." (p. 101)

Slemon (2001) explains that the term 'post-colonial' or 'post-colonialism' has been problematized because of lack of consensus over how 'colonialism' is situated within a concept of "imperialism," and by a lack of consensus over what the "post" might mean. For Young (2001), "the 'post' marks the many remarkable victories that should not be allowed to fade into the amnesia of history" (p. 60).

"For the cultures seeking to extricate themselves from the history of imperial dominance, postcolonial theory involves utilizing, strengthening and developing the resources of their own histories and political and intellectual traditions" (Young, 2001, p. 66). Hence, postcolonial theory, according to Young (2001), operates on the assumption that the intellectual and cultural traditions which have developed outside the West constitute a body of knowledge that can be deployed to great effect against the political and cultural hegemony of the West, because the goal of postcolonial theory is to undo the ideological heritage of colonialism not only in the decolonized countries such as St. Lucia, for example, but also in the West itself. A rule of thumb to note is that "once the process of political decolonization has taken place, then a cultural decolonization must follow" (p. 65).

However, a decentring of the intellectual sovereignty and dominance of Europe's political culture deeply rooted in decolonized countries is not easy to accomplish. This conviction is fully embraced in the words of Young (2001): "Today, postcolonial struggles for autonomy, real independence and self-determination have to contend with a complex adversary whose power is dispersed through a wide range of globalized institutions and practices" (p. 59). What this conception means from a humanitarian orientation is intervention rather than withdrawal. Today, what happens in St. Lucian elementary classrooms when basilectal-Creole-English-speaking children are learning English language and literacy needs to be explored against the backdrop of postcolonial theory. To this end, this discussion directs me to examine the ways postcolonialism has influenced literate societies to re-conceptualize the term 'literacy'.

Definition of Literacy

For the purpose of this study, a definition of literacy is in order. According to Ladson-Billings (1992), "Literacy has come to mean different things to different people in different contexts" (p. 380). For Farris et al. (2004), it involves thinking, decision making, and various ways to communicate—it goes well beyond simply knowing how to read and write, functional literacy. It is on this basis that Willis (1997) criticizes certain meanings and purposes attached to literacy by historians and literacy researchers by arguing that many historians and researchers have offered a narrow view of literacy either as a skill or knowledge acquired in schooling. Further, literacy researchers, she asserts, "offer examples of theory-based research that often translates poorly into practice in real classrooms" (p. 387). The limitations of those theory-based research initiatives in literacy, according to the author, are that race, class, ethnicity, gender, language, and geographical location have been largely avoided, ignored, marginalized, or misrepresented. Similarly, literacy assessments have not generally acknowledged the influences of ideological, historical, cultural, social, linguistic, economic, and institutional contexts on literacy acquisition and performance.

Willis (1997), then, describes those definitions and purposes of literacy in the nineteenth and twentieth century using these three broad perspectives: literacy as a skill (Literacy is the ability to read and write); literacy-as-school-knowledge (Literacy is a cognitive skill that can be measured and interpreted as an indicator of intelligence and school achievement); and, literacy as a social and cultural construct (Literacy that both reflects and is part of the social, cultural, and linguistic contexts). Willis (1997) makes it clear that school practices that espouse the first two definitions—literacy as a skill and literacy-as-school-knowledge—have supported and maintained the inequalities in literacy and education. On the other hand, schools whose practices are driven by a definition of literacy as a social and cultural construct or practice are in a position to address the needs of all their students. Consequently, there need not be a social, cultural, or linguistic mismatch between those schools and their students. Furthermore, those school will not "privilege certain groups and disprivilege others to relinquish" (Willis, 1997, p. 391) schooling.

Nevertheless, from Willis' (1997) perspective, there is hope, as she emphatically states, "Fortunately, many of us are working with broader definitions and purposes for literacy that are respectful of historical, ideological, social, cultural, economic, linguistic, and gender differences that affect literacy learning" (p. 394). Gee (1989) is a classic example, as he presents his definition of literacy from a broad orientation—that is, through his notion of "Discourse" (with a capital 'D') and "discourse" (with a little 'd'). He asserts that "any socially useful definition of 'literacy' must be couched in terms of the notion of Discourse" (p. 9). For Gee (1989), not all Discourses involve reading or writing, although many do. However, all reading and writing is embedded in some Discourse. Therefore, Discourse always involves more than reading and writing: ways of talking, acting, valuing, and so forth. Gee's discussion on Discourse leads him to articulate his definition of literacy "as *the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse* [italics added]" (p. 9). Notably, he emphasizes the usefulness of mechanics, "correctness," the superficial features of language (discourses with a little 'd'), within the "middle-class mainstream" types of Discourses. He is of the view that these sorts of Discourses often carry with them power and prestige. Consequently, "these Discourses are used as 'gates' to ensure that the 'right' people get to the 'right' places in our society, such superficial features are ideal" (p. 11). Willis (1997) makes an important point: "How we define literacy and the purposes we set for literacy are more important than ever to the maintenance of a democratic society" (p. 392).

Further, literacy has been viewed as a "double-edged sword." Green (2001) provides an explanation of this metaphor: literacy can be enlightening or liberating but can also be restrictive or dominating. For example, within the context of the school, literacy can limit students. When textbooks are selected that portray a mainstream view of the world, and when traditional literacy practices are used, which often limit literacy to copying and the completion of worksheets or assignment questions, literacy is far from liberating. The result is that the status of the marginalized group is maintained. The view that literacy is far from liberating can be understood from the perspective of the family also. As expressed by Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), "Literacy is not always liberating. The economic circumstances in which the families live create a social (political?) climate in which print in various forms is used to intrude upon their everyday lives" (p. 202).

Pollard (1997) explains that the content of the literature taught in colonial Caribbean schools (such as St. Lucia) in the first half of the century was of minimal relevance, and that "the view of all literature as formal and outside of the reality of life was easy to maintain in colonial times when 'children of the Empire' came to the study of literature through writing that had little to do with their environments" (p. 166). Caribbean school children were taught European literature instead of Caribbean literature. For example, books transported St. Lucian and other Caribbean children into settings that were not really meaningful because they were not culturally-specific or accessible or relevant—settings which included chimneys, apple trees (instead of mango trees), and snow (rather than mud).

In examining literature and the Caribbean classroom in this 21st century, one can say that there has been a paradigm shift regarding the types of literary texts that feed into the school system. There is a shift in focus from foreign to local texts—local texts, from a regional perspective, which we call Caribbean literature. Needless to say, this movement was a challenge to some Caribbean teachers who perceived canonized Western texts as those worthy of attention and, therefore, disdained Caribbean literature once referred to as 'Commonwealth' or 'Third World.' To echo Pollard's (1997) words, "The challenge of the early post-independence Caribbean classroom was to introduce Caribbean literature to the students. Attitudes to language for example allowed some writing to enter before others" (p. 168). Johnston (1996) has a powerful voice on this matter:

> For them [many teachers], a literary curriculum is a static notion, consisting of a stack of old texts, usually from Britain and the United States, that they feel have stood the test of time. With little understanding of the history of such texts or the power of the literary canon, such teachers resist any notion of change. (p. 61)

Cultural Diversity in the Classroom: Educational, Political, Language, and Family-Structure Issues

My discussion of cultural diversity in the classroom incorporates educational, political, language and family-structure issues. Firstly, "Diversity means that significant differences exist in any classroom population. These differences may be in skin color, native language, ethnic heritage, gender, socioeconomic family status, family structure, cultural group, and life experiences" (Harp & Brewer, 2005, p. 397). These issues have received a lot of attention by leading scholars, within the cultural sphere. Delpit (1995; 2002), for instance, is, indeed, a strong voice for the teaching and learning of language in settings of cultural diversity. Secondly, on the subject of language and culture, Lenski and Nierstheimer (2004) state,

> Sometimes, culture has been linked only to race or ethnicity; however, culture encompasses much more, such as family customs, language patterns, religious traditions, shared attitudes, values, and goals of a society or subgroup, and countless unspoken rules of behavior that

> particular groups practice and understand. All of these differences reflect elements of cultural heritage. (p. 61)

Bush (1998) views culture in this light as well: "Culture is a term frequently used loosely, without any precise, shared understanding. It is interpreted as a shared set of values coherently linking language, religion, kinship, work, family, leisure and individuals' concepts of the world around them" (p. 18). Vygotsky (1978) posits that language is one of the elements that defines a person's cultural identity; language is the basis for thinking and communication.

Of relevance to this review of cultural diversity in the classroom, are the educational, political, language, and family-structure issues regarding the use of Ebonics in American schools. Ebonics, otherwise known as "Black English," is an African-American English dialect—a variety of English, with specific rules and vocabularies—spoken by the African-American population in America. In the "Ebonics Debate," regarding the use of Ebonics in the classroom, Delpit (2002) takes a neutral stance. She says: "I can be neither for Ebonics or against Ebonics any more than I can be for or against air" (p. 124). In this position statement, Delpit is reckoning with the indispensability of the Ebonics dialect. For example, she emotionally articulates the following:

> It is the language spoken by many of our African-American children. It is the language they heard as their mothers nursed them and changed their diapers and played peek-a-boo with them. It is the language through which they first encountered love, nurturance and joy. (p. 124)

Essentially, Delpit (2002) is asking how can African-American children possibly survive without use of their native language? Obviously, it is absolutely impossible. With respect to her perspective on the standard form of the English language, she acknowledges its indispensable nature as well, and states, "While having access to the politically mandated language form [standard English] will not, by any means, guarantee economic success (witness the growing numbers of unemployed African Americans holding doctorates), not having access will almost certainly guarantee failure" (p. 124). In this dilemma, what, then, must classroom teachers do?

Delpit (2002), in her attempt to bring a solution to this problem, asks a probing question, "How can both realities be embraced in classroom instruction?" (p. 125). She, therefore, sets the ground work by succinctly declaring: "It is possible and desirable to make the actual study of language diversity a part of the curriculum for all students" (p. 125). Her view resonates with the view of a number of scholars who assert: "We think school is about equity and excellence, and that the charge to a modern diverse school is to develop a curriculum that is bilingual, multicultural, and option-filled" (Lapp, Fisher, Flood, & Cabello, 2001, p. 1). Delpit (2002) provides a philosophical foundation upon which the design and implementation of such a curriculum can become a reality. She posits that, first, teachers should recognize that the linguistic form a student brings to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and personal identity and, to suggest that the form is wrong or, at worse, ignorant, is to suggest that something is wrong with the student and his or her family.

This philosophical view is similar to Julia Kristeva's notion of 'the foreigner'. Kristeva (1991), in her book titled *Strangers To Ourselves*, disseminates a powerful and compelling message regarding the way people from a minority group in any stratified society are usually stereotyped, marginalized, and ostracized by certain people from the majority group, because of differences in language, race, class, nationality, culture, and so on. Sadly enough, they are stereotyped as "foreigners"—people who are not loved, respected, and accepted, if at all tolerated, for "who" they are in the space that they happen to occupy. It is like saying—to connect with Delpit's (2002) idea—something is wrong with these people and the culture that gave them birth. Another pertinent question is, then, raised: How can teachers successfully teach language and literacy to students in culturally-diverse classrooms? Teale and Yokota (2000) posit,

> There has been comparatively little research into the issues related to teaching culturally or linguistically diverse primary grade children to read and write, and certainly no proven models for instruction have been developed. Thus, one of the biggest challenges facing early childhood teachers today is achieving greater success with literacy instruction for diverse students. (p. 17)

Among the few who have researched this very important subject are Delpit (2002), Diller (1999), Heath (1983), Ladson-Billings (1994), Nero (2000), Teale and Yokota (2000), and Yokota (1995). Delpit (2002) asks a pertinent question that bears major implications for the teaching of language to students with diverse language backgrounds: "Should [teachers] spend their time relentlessly 'correcting' their Ebonics-speaking children's language so that it might conform to what we learned to refer to as Standard English?" (p. 124). Delpit (2002) acknowledges that while the teacher, with good intentions, makes it his or her duty to "correct" students' speech, constant correction rarely has the desired effect. Constant correction "increases cognitive monitoring of speech, thereby making talking difficult" (p. 124). In other words, it is very difficult for a child, or any individual for that matter, to apply rules while trying to formulate and express a thought. Such correction can have negative effects on students. According to Delpit (2002), "Forcing speakers to monitor their language typically produces silence," and at worse, "Correction may also affect students' attitudes [negatively] toward their teachers" (p. 125). This, in turn, may create a situation which will minimize the probability of students adopting their teachers' speech style. Consider this situation which shows the negative effects of correction. Delpit (2002) writes:

> In a recent research project, middle-school, inner-city students were interviewed about their attitudes toward their teachers and school. One young woman complained bitterly, "Mrs.—always be interrupting to make you 'talk correct' and stuff. She be butting into your conversations when you not even talking to her! She need to mind her own business." (p. 125)

From the scenario above, one can conclude that the student's behavior demonstrates disgust. This behavior does not speak well for language learning in a diverse classroom. It is no wonder that Delpit (2002), in the book *The Skin That We Speak*, forcefully warns teachers: "We cannot constantly correct children and expect them to continue to talk like us" (p. 33).

In the context of language diversity in the classroom, it is pertinent to view the role that the two languages—Standard English and Creole English—play within the St. Lucian primary education system.

The Place of Creole and Standard English in Language and Literacy Instruction within the St. Lucian Primary Education System

In this postcolonial era, the legacy of colonialism can be readily seen in the context of language and literacy instruction within the St. Lucian education system. In fact, many children do not even attend school, although the numbers in this situation would be impossible to determine. Millar (1995) aptly reminds us in a St. Lucian newspaper article of the nature of our education system:

> Our education system is a remnant of a British colonial legacy steeped in classicism. The system was designed to maintain Britain's class structure and it serves a similar purpose here in St. Lucia. Students who leave school after failing Common Entrance or those who never entered the system in the first place feed the labourer class. Those who make it to secondary school but leave Form 5 or earlier with few or no certificates feed the upper levels of the labourer class. Those who leave Form 6 with few or no certificates feed the lower middle class ranks, and those who go on to tertiary education and return with a university degree of some sort, feed the middle class ranks. The upper class rank is reserved for those with hoards of money. (p. 13)

The nature of the St. Lucian education system has forced Millar (1995) to challenge the education system by asking some thought-provoking questions, such as, "What is the school system that our children are going to?" "What is its purpose?" "Is the current school curriculum relevant to St. Lucia?" "What kind of individuals are produced when students exit the system?" "What happens to a child who didn't pass Common

Entrance exams?" As a researcher and educator, I am prompted to examine the current place of Creole English and Standard English in language and literacy instruction within the St. Lucian primary education system. "As the sole official language in the Anglophone Caribbean, English is used as the medium of public communication in such areas as the state bureaucracy, the legal system, the mass media and other areas normally associated with official languages. It is also the vehicle of literacy, and the medium of education at all levels of the education system" (Winford, 1991, p. 568). The author goes on to say that English enjoys considerable prestige and is associated with the upper echelons in the Caribbean region. English is, evidently, the language of power.

Frank (1993) casts more light on this issue: "The constitution of St. Lucia requires that elected officials must be able to speak and read English" (p. 46). Similarly, the education system past and present has had a considerable influence on language choice. For example, Frank states that "in the past, signs have been posted in schools stating that speaking Creole was forbidden" (p. 41). In fact, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) state that the prohibition of the speaking of Creole around 1884 in primary schools was in force for many years in St. Lucia and teachers could be dismissed if heard using Creole.

Some of the reasons advanced for the use of English in schools rather than Creole French, for example, stem from a historical perspective: unlike English, Creole French was an unwritten language and so educational materials were available only in English. Consequently, it was much easier to establish educational programs in English than Creole. Also, the British government viewed English as the language of education in St. Lucia; one that would facilitate economic development, nation building, and integration into the British Empire. This view influenced the attitude of the vast majority of educators and St. Lucians at large toward the use of the English language in schools and in other formal settings. Consequently, in St. Lucia, Creole French is considered "broken French" and not a real language at all (Frank, 1993). More importantly, the Creole English, particularly the basilectal variety, which is the main focus of this study, stands on the same prejudicial grounds in St. Lucia; basilectal Creole English is considered "broken English" and not a real language at all.

In the 1970s Midgett's evaluation of language attitudes in St. Lucia was one that revealed that the use of Patios/Creole French was equated with all that is backward, rural, Negro, unsophisticated and ignorant (Midgett, 1970). Truly, the legacy of slavery and British colonialization in the Caribbean region has "forced" the continuous interaction of the Creole and Standard English into an unequal relationship that has privileged the standard variety and prejudiced the Creole variety (Nero, 1997b).

English has remained the sole medium of education in St. Lucian schools, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of children who enter school are native speakers of Creole and have experienced great difficulty learning and using the English language. In fact, "Competency in English is seen as essential for any child to gain entry into a good secondary school and, thus, have a chance of succeeding in life" (Frank, 1993, p. 52). From published research studies, examination reports, and documents, it is safe to conclude that the sole use of English as the medium of education has the potential to and, in fact, has been posing difficulties to many Creole-speaking students. For instance, St. Lucia National Language Arts Curriculum for Infant Schools (1999) highlights some of those potential difficulties:

> Children whose first language is a Creole are faced with a peculiar problem. On entering school, they must learn to function, communicate and perform academically demanding tasks, such as the learning of concepts in a language which is not their first language. For many Creole-speaking children, the degree of exposure to the language of education outside the formal system is limited. These factors affect the children's progress in learning. (p. 2- iv)

Also, the St. Lucia Educational Evaluation and Examination Unit's (1998) report highlights some of the difficulties students face as revealed on the Standard two Minimum Standard local examination:

> The Standard two examination results indicated that whereas a few students had mastered the Minimum Standard Test syllabus, the majority of them had not. Some responses to questions were so far-fetched that the conclusion drawn was that these students were not able to read. (p. 68)

Further, the St. Lucia Educational Evaluation and Examination Unit's (1999) report on the Common Entrance local examination reveals the following:

> On the whole, students were unable to handle the mechanics of the language. Subject-verb agreement and consistency of tense were definitely problematic for a large number of students. The prepositions in, at, on, and by were used badly, for example, "I was going at the beach." Many students were unable to write fluent and well-structured sentences. There were many instances of fragments and run-ons. Another common mistake was the use of double negatives. Other Creole structures were

> encountered frequently in students' writing, for example, "We doing a lot of money in bananas." (p. 16)

In light of the difficulties Creole-influenced Vernacular (CIV) speaking children face, Craig (1999) emphatically states,

> There is no mystery about the source of the problem: CIV-speaking children in traditional school systems are required to read a language, which differs significantly from their home language, and which they cannot speak, even though it shares much common vocabulary with their home language. (p. 89)

Given the reality of the language situation in St. Lucian schools, have there been any efforts to teach children in their native language? Frank (1993) recounts that while in the past there was disagreement as to whether instruction should emphasize English or French, Creole was apparently never given much attention. To quote Frank (1993): "There is still a strong sentiment among some prominent figures in the field of education in St. Lucia that English is good for the people and Creole is bad" (p. 51). To further quote Frank (1993), "There is no record of any school that used Creole as a medium of instruction, with the exception of the adult literacy classes begun recently" (p. 50). Frank's (1993) explication in regard to the adult literacy classes is that one might have expected that the program would have been geared toward teaching literacy in the native language, since that was the intention. Interestingly, the organizers of the pilot project responded to the felt needs of the students to teach English literacy instead.

Recently, some research initiatives (on a small scale) have attempted to implement literacy instruction in the students' native language in St. Lucian primary schools. Simmons-McDonald (2002) conducted a preliminary pilot study in which a model for developing multi-literacy among first language Creole French and English-lexicon vernacular speakers in St. Lucia was implemented. Simmons-McDonald (2002) posits,

> The study found a positive transfer of reading abilities from the native to the second language. It therefore corroborates findings of studies done elsewhere, namely, that instruction in the child's native language can be a help and not a hindrance to the development of literacy in the L2. (p. 9)

Farris et al. (2004), among several others, are in support of Simmons-McDonald's (2002) research findings. They concur that "it is essential that one's native language is not denigrated. It is, in fact, the foundation upon which future learning is built" (p. 28). Literacy in the L2 can, indeed, be viewed as an important area for future learning.

A distinction must be made, when it comes to teaching English language and literacy, between L2/ESL/EFL (second language/English as a second language/English as a foreign language) and ESD (English as a second dialect). A St. Lucian student, for example, whose native language is Creole French will learn to read and write English as a second or foreign language (ESL) because, as has been stated, Creole French and English are different from each other both lexically and grammatically. However, a St. Lucian student whose native language is Creole English will learn to read and write English as a second dialect, that is, Standard English. In this case, the two dialects—Creole English and Standard English—are related since they are varieties or dialects of the same language, English. Creole English, then, is the first dialect and Standard English the second or 'new' dialect to be learned. In spite of the fact that the majority of educators do not consider Creole-English speakers native speakers of English, English is, from a linguistic point of view, the native language of both Creole-English speakers and Standard English speakers.

It follows, then, that Creole English students have different needs (for example, literacy) from ESL students and from Standard English students (Coelho, 1991). This conclusion was drawn from Coelho's (1991) study, among several others, of anglophone Caribbean students (meaning, ESD students) in North American elementary and secondary schools. In Canadian schools in particular, Coelho's (1991) study revealed that linguistic difficulties and (mis) placement in ESL classes were two of several factors responsible for the academic underachievement of anglophone Caribbean students. Twenty percent of Canadian teachers of ESL students reported having anglophone Caribbean students in their classes. To underpin Coelho's claims, Nero (1997a) proposes two reasons that the needs of anglophone Caribbean students are not being met. Firstly, anglophone Caribbean students perceive themselves as English speakers. Consequently, they become less motivated to learn English as a separate language when placed in ESL classes. I term such a situation "a mismatch of sociolinguistic identity," which can, undoubtedly, create a negative impact on a student's self-esteem. Secondly, anglophone Caribbean students' metalinguistic knowledge of Standard English far exceeds that of ESL students as well as that of many speakers of languages other than English because of the constant interaction between Standard English and Creole along the Creole continuum. The fact is that anglophone Caribbean students' language learning needs are different from that of ESL students. Roberts (1988) makes a significant contribution in full support of this subject. He posits:

> The objectives and syllabus in the learning of a foreign language are different from those for native language. Simply put, the difference between the two is that in the latter you are learning about a language and in the former you are learning a language. One of the implications of this is that the pedagogic grammar for native language is preoccupied with structures and forms because the relationship between form and meaning is implicit. On the other hand, in pedagogic grammars for foreign language learners the relationship between form and meaning must be explicit. (p. 189)

There is a distinction between ESL and ESD students. ESL students are learning a new language (in this case, English—more specifically, Standard English), whereas ESD students are English speakers learning another variety (or dialect/vernacular) of English (in this case, Standard English). To echo the words of Barone, Mallette, and Xu (2005), "At school, ELL [English language learners] children must learn to speak and write a whole new language whereas their native English-speaking peers come to school to practice and improve their spoken English, as well as to learn the written language" (p. 47). Therefore, the learning of Standard English is not equally difficult or equally easy for both sets of learners, since Standard English is not entirely new to ESD students, as opposed to ESL students. ESD students already possess more background knowledge or receptive knowledge of standard oral and written English—a powerful predictor of reading comprehension. Consequently, "the teaching of meaning need not be explicit in all cases" (Roberts, 1988, p. 190). For example, the teaching of meaning need not be explicit in all cases to basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students whose speech is at one end of the English language continuum and, more so, to mesolectal-Creole-English-speaking students whose speech variety is closer to the Standard English at the other end of the continuum. Craig (1983), however, makes no exceptions when it comes to Creole English speakers constructing meaning from texts. He assertively posits:

> It is generally agreed that nonstandard dialect is no barrier to early reading, but at the same time the indications are that it does become a barrier once the child has grasped the mechanical aspects of reading and becomes seriously involved in comprehending at the sentence and discourse levels. (p. 66)

Unfortunately, many teachers are not aware of the dichotomy that sets the teaching of ESL students apart from ESD students. Many Creole-English students are assigned to ESL classes, placing them eventually at several disadvantageous points—not just in school but throughout their lives. It is important to note that in St. Lucia Creole-English-speaking students are not placed in ESL classrooms, as is done in American and Canadian classrooms, since there is not an ESL program in the school system. Rather, basilectal-Creole-English students, who have difficulty learning to read and write are likely to be placed in classes for "slow" learners, without any forms of intervention. In addition, with the colonial mentality which continues to create the notion that Standard English is the ideal language and that it should be used exclusively in school, many teachers display negative attitudes toward students who speak basilectal-Creole English (despite the fact that they themselves are users of Creole English, if not natives), misplace them in academic classes. This situation is only a subset of language attitudes in the academic landscape. Bowie and Bond (1994) concur that teachers often harbor negative attitudes toward students who speak CCE (Caribbean Creole English) or AAVE (African American Vernacular English). Nero (2000) is of the opinion that these attitudes may cause teachers to place students in inappropriate classes, such as learning-disabled or special education, and to lead them to have low expectations of such students. It is imperative that teachers' understanding of Creole English and its speakers be enhanced. What is really important here is that its systematicity be recognized so that appropriate language and literacy programs can be designed and implemented in St. Lucian elementary schools.

Researchers concur that St. Lucian schools need mainly an ESD (English as a second dialect) program that is geared toward meeting the needs of Creole-English students. This suggestion is linguistically and pedagogically sound as it would help to alleviate the frustration expressed by several teachers at not being able to address the linguistic needs of basilectal-Creole-English learners who grapple with unfamiliar registers of academic written texts, among others. Nero (2000) informs us that, such students "might benefit from judicious use of ESL approaches without being necessarily placed into an ESL class" (p. 504).

Models for Effective Literacy Instruction

The study reported in this dissertation draws upon the language and literacy framework developed by Ladson-Billings (1994; 2002). Ladson-Billings (1994), whose work has been grounded in what she terms *culturally relevant teaching*, appeals for teachers to teach in culturally relevant ways that are based on students' prior knowledge and interests. She defines culturally relevant teaching as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 17-18). Culturally relevant teaching involves teachers, themselves, discovering the cultural referents that are relevant to their students in the communities in which they teach, and bringing examples and experiences from their students' cultural heritage into their classrooms. Further, Ladson-Billings (2002) posits that this notion, *culturally relevant pedagogy*, is a theoretical construct that rests on three propositions: 1. Successful teaching focuses on students' academic achievement. 2. Successful teaching supports students' cultural competence, and 3. Successful teaching promotes students' socio-political consciousness.

Each of these propositions needs explication: students' academic achievement, according to Ladson-Billings (2002), represents intellectual growth and the ability to produce knowledge. Schools must ensure that students are learning. That learning can be clearly demonstrated in student competency in a variety of skills and subject areas. Schools need to ask: Are students able to read, write, make critical decisions, and problem-solve? These skills can be benchmarks upon which students' academic achievement is evaluated. Next, students' cultural competence is viewed as the ability of students to grow in understanding and respect for their culture of origin. Instead of experiencing the alienating effects of education where school-based learning detaches students from their home culture, cultural competence is a way for students to be bicultural and facile in the ability to move between school and home cultures. Finally, socio-political consciousness refers to students' abilities to ask larger socio-political questions about how schools and society work to expose ongoing inequity and social injustice. If students do not begin to ask these questions, they, too, are likely to hold established positions that suggest that the reason people are unsuccessful in school lies within themselves.

The study reported in this dissertation also draws upon the literacy framework—*four resources model*—developed by Freebody and Luke (1990). The four resources model includes the following four roles in which literate individuals must engage:

1. Code breaker—This involves students developing resources for breaking the code of texts, for example, recognizing and using the fundamental features and architecture of written texts including: alphabet, sounds in words, spelling, punctuation, conventions and patterns of sentence structure and text.
2. Text participant—This involves students understanding and composing meaningful written, visual and spoken texts from within the meaning systems of particular cultures, institutions, families, communities, the broader societies and so forth. For example, learners read multicultural texts and talk about them.
3. Text user—This involves students using texts functionally. Students learn to traverse the social relations around texts; know about and act on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform both inside and outside of school and know that these functions shape the way texts are structured, their tone, their degree of formality and their sequence of components. For example, students learn how to use a telephone directory, a menu, a website, a newspaper and so on.
4. Text analyst/critic—This involves students critically analyzing and transforming texts. Students learn to understand and act on the knowledge that texts are not neutral, that they represent particular views and silence other points of view, influence people's ideas; and that their designs and discourses can be critiqued and redesigned, in novel and hybrid

ways. For example, students learn to understand what advertisements do, how newspaper articles are slanted, and the messages embedded in a picture book, a game and the like.

Freebody and Luke (1990) emphasize that none of the above four dimensions of literacy has any priority over the others and that all of them need to be addressed simultaneously in an integrated view of literacy pedagogy. "One of the strengths of the 'four resources model' is that it attempts to recognize and incorporate many of the current and well-developed techniques for training students in becoming literate" (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 1-2). In so doing, according to the authors,

> It shifts the focus from trying to find the right method to whether the range of practices emphasized in one's reading program are indeed covering and integrating a broad repertoire of textual practices that are required in new economies and cultures. (p. 2)

It is plain to see that Luke and Freebody (1999) would not, by any means, endorse the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to literacy instruction, as they take one further step by articulating that "it is not that some teaching methods work and others do not. They all shape and construct different literate repertoires in classrooms. They all have outcomes visible in practices and motivations" (p. 4). There is no single approach that can meet the needs of all students in a class.

In this 21st century, there are four important principles that can be set out to guide appropriate language and literacy learning in a St. Lucian third-grade class of basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students. Delpit (2002) declares:

> First, the teacher should recognize that the linguistic form a student brings to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and

> personal identity. To suggest that this form is "wrong" or, even worse, ignorant, is to suggest that something is wrong with the student and his or her family. (p. 125)

The teacher, then, should respect students' native language in the classroom so that students would feel confident in using their language. Such confidence would allow for a positive transfer from the students' first language to the target language. Secondly, constant correction, used as a language improvement strategy, of children's language seldom has this desired effect (Delpit, 2002). Thirdly, basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students need to "learn that there are many ways of saying the same thing, and that certain contexts suggest particular kinds of linguistic performances [or registers, or what has been referred to by Gee (1989) as "Discourses"]" (Delpit, 2002, p. 125). In order to facilitate the learning of St. Lucian Standard English, students can be given opportunities to use their native language when the need arises. The teacher can use it as a bridge to get to the use of the target language. Thus, an accommodation program becomes critical. An accommodation program, according to Siegel (1999) is one in which the Creole vernacular would not be used as a medium of instruction, but would be fully accepted in the regular classroom. It is expected that such a program is incorporated into the language arts curriculum.

The fourth important principle based on Luke's (1993) view is that literacy learning is as much about identities, values, and ideologies as it is about codes and skills. This thinking underlies Freebody and Luke's (1990) "four resources model" already cited. "Values are qualities that people, as individuals and groups, consider important as principles of conduct and as major aims of existence. Personal values influence attitudes, decisions, and behavior, and affect interpersonal relationships" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993, p. 4). The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1993) maintains that children need to develop a positive sense of self and respect and concern for others; also, it is important for children to develop a sense of belonging in a community, a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to democracy and human rights, and a love of learning.

In this view of literacy learning, Heath's (1983) research reveals that most young children, including those of diverse backgrounds, develop understandings of language and literacy before they enter kindergarten. However, families or communities differ in the ways in which they use language and literacy. According to Au (2000), this research has implications for classroom practice: teachers can support students' progress as readers and writers by including lessons on the functions of literacy that are already likely to be familiar. These lessons help young children see that the literacy knowledge that they have gained in their homes and communities has a place in school and can contribute to their becoming good readers and writers. This implication resonates with Ladson-Billings' (1994) notion of "culturally relevant teaching." Essentially, children develop language skills, attitudes, and values through socialization, thus, a critical perspective of literacy from the standpoint of the St. Lucian Ministry of Education's policy goal is absolutely necessary in order for those outcomes to be realized.

Policy Goal from the St. Lucian Ministry of Education

Based on the preceding discussion, it makes sense to explore the St. Lucian Ministry of Education's policy goal for literacy education (That is, to enable learners to express themselves verbally and to become functionally literate). The goal for students to acquire functional skills appears to be outdated in light of the demands of the 21st century, where "our lifestyles are changing rapidly in a hi-tech, globalised world" (Tasmania Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). The St. Lucian policy goal for literacy education, therefore, needs to be reviewed to "demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems and analysing the causes and effects of power relationships within groups in the immediate community, the larger community, and the world" (Creighton, 1997, p. 442). Further, Creighton states that in order to demonstrate an understanding of the world, we must help students develop and apply higher level/critical thinking skills. To achieve such outcomes in St. Lucian elementary classrooms, an alternative approach to literacy instruction is warranted.

Kempe (2001) highlights some of the difficulties that may arise in developing alternative approaches which result in a more critical classroom practice. She cautions policy and curriculum makers:

> There is danger that the practices which are adopted might become the new orthodoxy, and that empowerment might simply become acculturation into the dominant ways of reading and writing, particularly given that success in the dominant discourses is likely to ensure success in the education system and the workplace. (p. 41)

Kempe (2001) cautions further, as others have done, that "alternative discourses are likely to face difficulties in gaining acceptance since they challenge existing power structures" (p. 41). Nevertheless, Kempe (2001) counteracts this limitation in purporting that although there are likely to be risks and problems involved, a teaching practice that draws attention to the workings of power and ideology is more likely to be empowering than one that does not. What I believe Kempe (2001) is implicitly saying to us is that, even in the face of resistance to change, it is worth the while for educators to challenge and deconstruct a system that favors stratification over equity.

Social Constructivist Theory

The social constructivist theory is foundational to the ideas discussed above. Social constructivism is a combination of three theories that were developed in the last half of the 20th century: cognitive, constructivist, and sociocultural theories (Shepard, 2000). The notions of social constructivism are rooted in the work of renowned scholars such as Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky. For example, some of the notions of social constructivism emanate from Dewey's (1938) belief that at the heart of learning is experience. Piaget's (1977) notion that learners assimilate new information within existing knowledge structures, accommodate the knowledge structures to new situations and move between assimilation and accommodation as necessary has been extremely influential and served as the foundation for social constructivism. Vygotsky (1978) has also been greatly influential in the genesis of social constructivism. Vygotsky went further than Dewey and Piaget and added a new idea—the idea of language and interactions in learning—to constructivism: he postulated that not only do learners actively use their minds to develop new knowledge, but they also use language and personal interactions in learning. Thus, learning begins on the social level through language and then is internalized. The language events that most effectively facilitate learning are social, but they also involve learners and "more knowledgeable others" in these social interactions.

Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical framework claims that knowledge is acquired within a social context, hence the term *social constructivism.* Phillips (1995) argues that learners do not merely respond to stimulus as posited by behaviourists, rather, learners actively acquire knowledge; knowledge is socially constructed, created or recreated. Lenski and Nierstheimer (2004) also shed light on Vygotsky's (1978) notion:

> Learners actively use their minds to construct their own individual meaning. This meaning is constructed using their background knowledge; and because every learner's background knowledge is different, every person's construction of meaning is unique. Learners also construct meaning in concert with other people. Knowledge, therefore, is socially constructed. (p. 15)

Summary

The St. Lucian society is marked by much language variation. In the St. Lucian educational system, there exists a problem regarding basilectal-Creole-English students learning English language and literacy. In this respect, the review of the related literature provides background information on the nature of the problem from a historical, theoretical, socio-cultural, and methodological standpoint. The literature guides the identification of some important principles which have major implications for the teaching and learning of language and literacy in an educational setting such as St. Lucia's: teachers should respect and accept students' native language in the classroom; constant correction, when used as a language improvement strategy of children's language, hardly has this desired effect; students need to learn that there are many ways of saying the same thing, and that certain settings suggest particular kinds of registers; culturally relevant teaching helps to empower students in a number of ways; with a focus also on a critical literacy approach, literacy learning is as much about identities, values, and ideologies as it is about codes and skills.

It should be noted that in this chapter, I used the term "social constructivism" as a learning theory that guides how children learn language in elementary classrooms. However, in the next chapter (three) which deals with the research approach and, in particular, the theoretical framework, I use the term "constructivism" (a strand of social constructivism) not as a learning theory per se, but as a research paradigm. I also describe the research site, the participants, and the data collection methods in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH APPROACH

Meaning is situated in a particular perspective or context that is different for people and groups; therefore, the world has many meanings.

Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2006, p. 10)

Theoretical Framework

My purpose for conducting this study, as previously stated, was to gain a better understanding of the teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences that were provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected/Standard English language. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert, "Paradigm issues are crucial; no inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach" (p. 116). Guba and Lincoln explain that a paradigm may be viewed as "the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways" (p. 105). The paradigm which fundamentally informed and guided this inquiry was *constructivism* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Constructivism

Constructivism assumes that researchers seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. The "investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the "findings" are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). "Thus, constructivist researchers often address the 'processes' of interaction among individuals" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that "constructions are not more or less 'true,' in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated. Constructions are alterable" (p. 111). I approached the research, then, with the belief that my participants' constructions of the phenomenon under study were subject to change. This meant that I did not expect my participants' constructions or realities to be more or less "true" or "real," in any absolute sense, but that their constructions would have informed my understanding so as to arrive at a consensus of meaning. Additionally, constructivist researchers "focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Thus, I was interested in the classroom context in which the research was conducted, in order to understand the nature of the participants' lived experiences. "Research focused on discovery, insight, and *understanding from the perspectives of those being studied* [italics added] offers greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (Ellis, 1997, p. 2).

The constructivist paradigm does not claim to be "value free" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) put forth a strong argument in support of Guba and Lincoln's view:

> The *bricoleur* [researcher] understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting. The *bricoleur* [italics added] knows that science is power, for all research findings have political implications. There is no value-free science. (p. 3)

Essentially, my foreknowledge of the phenomenon under study assisted me in raising questions. Those questions raised enabled me to gain a more profound insight into the research problem.

However, I recognized that my own background experience shaped my interpretations. This is inevitable and can work for the good of the researcher who holds a constructivist stance, as Creswell (2003), Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) have clearly demonstrated. I, therefore, made a conscious effort to not rely on one correct meaning of the phenomenon under analysis. Therefore, throughout the research process, I encouraged, as much as possible, discussion of multiple meanings of the phenomenon with my participants. If meaning is to be created in order for it to be logical and plausible, then there must be a transaction between the etic views (outsider) and the emic views (insider) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

On the question of research method and methodology, van Manen (1990) states, "We need to make a distinction between research *method* [italics added] and research methodology" (p. 27). He explains:

> On the one hand, "methodology" refers to the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective. It includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be associated with or implied by a certain research method. (p. 27)

In other words, "We might say that the methodology is the theory behind the method, including the study of what method one should follow and why" (p. 27-28). In short, "methodology means 'pursuit of knowledge.' And a certain *mode* [italics added] of inquiry is implied in the notion 'method'" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27-28). Based on this understanding, I inquired into the specific method of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that my theoretical framework/methodology had appropriated. That method was the *qualitative research method.*

Qualitative Research Method

My choice of paradigm (constructivism) and research question were favorably disposed to the qualitative research method. The aim of qualitative research is to gain meaning or insight into the phenomenon under study. Merriam (1998) writes: "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6).

The focus of qualitative research is on quality rather than quantity (as in quantitative research). Merriam (1988) explains that the word *quality* is used in the sense that in qualitative research, one is interested in process, meaning, and understanding. Words or pictures are used rather than numbers to convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon in its natural setting. Jordan (2005) solidifies Merriam's explanation by positing that "qualitative research methods are best suited to capturing multiple realities and describing social processes" (p. 206). Qualitative research is, thus, descriptive. Patton (2002) agrees that "qualitative data describe. They take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there" (p. 47). Another feature, according to Merriam (1988), that illuminates this element of 'quality' in qualitative research is that this type of research is largely inductive, meaning that it builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories, rather than testing existing theory. In other words, qualitative investigators begin with the collection of data and hope to find a theory that provides explanation for their data. Qualitative description and induction are, therefore, two important features, among others, that distinguish qualitative research from quantitative research.

Merriam (1998) further makes the claim that "qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). Merriam (1998) notes those forms of inquiry as naturalistic inquiry, interpretive research and case study, to name a few. She notes also that while these terms are often used interchangeably with the term 'qualitative research,' "some writers refer to these and other terms as types of qualitative research" (p. 5). For example, two of those writers I came across in my literature review were Best and Kahn (2006). These authors concur that "a variety of terms have been used for the various forms of qualitative methods, including ethnographic, case study, phenomenological, and others" (p. 246). Still, other writers refer to these forms of qualitative methods as, more specifically, 'strategies of inquiry.' For example, Creswell (2003) recommends that qualitative researchers choose from among five strategies of inquiry which are used frequently today. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) emphasize that a case study is a strategy of inquiry in qualitative research. These authors expound the term 'strategy of inquiry' by declaring that "a strategy of inquiry comprises a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world" (p. 14). One of those frequently used forms of qualitative methods pertinent to this research was the *case study*.

Case Study

Writers employ various approaches in defining case study. Some writers define case study in terms of the research process, for example, Yin (1994) defines it as " an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Others define it by placing emphasis on the 'unit of study' or 'unit of analysis'—the case. For example, the case could be one in which researchers explore in depth a process, an event, a program, an activity, or one or more individuals (Stake, 1995). The third-grade classroom in which I conducted the research was the case for this study.

The case study, according to Merriam (1998), can also be defined by its special features. Qualitative case studies (to be more descriptive) can be characterized as being:

1. Particularistic—meaning that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. The case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent. This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems, that is, for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice.
2. Descriptive—meaning that the end product of case study is a rich, "thick" description of the phenomenon under study. By "thick description" (a term from anthropology) is meant that a complete and literal description of the incident or entity being investigated is given. Case studies have been labeled *holistic*, *grounded*, *lifelike*, and *exploratory*. The description is usually qualitative, that

is, instead of reporting findings in numerical data, case studies use words or images to analyze situations and report findings.

3. Heuristic—meaning that case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study and can, thereby, bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known.

Further, others define case study in terms of its 'end product.' For example, Merriam (1988) defines a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21). "Irrespective of disciplinary orientation, case studies can also be described by the overall intent of the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). What Merriam (1988) means by this statement is that the end product of a case study can primarily be descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative. Each of these approaches, according to Merriam (1998), "reveals something about case studies and contributes to a general understanding of the nature of this kind of research" (p. 27). All in all, "A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p. 19). More importantly, "Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

In qualitative case studies, an overlap of strategies often occurs. Each strategy is connected to a complex literature; each has a separate history, exemplary works, and preferred ways for employing the strategy. This study utilized interpretive inquiry since "Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182).

The Research Setting

This study was conducted in a rural primary school in St. Lucia. The school, the Unity Primary School (a pseudonym), nestled on a tropical hillside, truly offering a spectacular landscape and a friendly atmosphere, contained classes from kindergarten through eighth grade. I was already familiar with some of the teachers and the principal. I had selected this school because I knew it had a high population of children speaking Creole English. The children's blue and black uniforms served as a visual reminder of the children's belonging to the school community.

The majority of the classrooms were divided by walls thick enough to keep the transmission of noise to a minimum, and the rest of the classrooms were divided by blackboards. The vast majority of the teachers were certificated, that is, they had successfully completed the two-year teacher education program at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration). One or two of the teachers, certificated and noncertificated, held a bachelor's degree. The school's curriculum comprised a wide range of subjects—the core subjects being language arts, mathematics, general science, and social studies. Other subjects, such as, religious education, music, physical education, health and family-life education, and art and craft formed part of the curriculum. A small school library/resource room, somewhat informal in its operation, had been timetabled to serve two classes at a time. The reason the library is viewed as being somewhat informal in its organization is that there was not a librarian to assist in the smooth functioning of the library. Grade-six students were the ones who sometimes spent time in the library during lunch to put books in order and to assist students in checking books in and out. Some of the teachers sometimes assisted in these tasks. All classrooms were diverse, in terms of language and literacy ability. School began at 8:55 a.m. and ended at 2:30 p.m. for the first and second grades, but ended at 3:00 p.m. for the upper grades. There were two breaks in between—snack and lunch. Lunch break was one hour long, from noon to 1:00 p.m.

Teacher Participant: Ms. Joseph

Ms. Joseph (pseudonym), a third-grade teacher at the school, had been teaching for approximately fourteen years. During Ms. Joseph's teaching career, she pursued the two-year teacher education program at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia and attained a teacher education certificate. Four years later, she pursued a three-year undergraduate degree program at the University of the West Indies and attained a Bachelor of Science degree.

Ms. Joseph's warm and gentle personality welcomed anyone into her classroom. In fact, her pleasant personality played a great role in dispelling the doubts and concerns that bothered me when I first began to conduct the research—concerns about whether I would quickly find a cooperative teacher to assist me, knowing that some teachers can be defensive when researchers observe their class, especially, for an extended period of time as I did. Although Ms. Joseph experienced moments of frustration in her classroom, she was able to look beyond the problems she encountered in teaching:

> *I think teaching is an interesting profession. It has its ups and downs; I enjoy it sometimes, but sometimes you can get very frustrated with the children. But then, I think it's a good profession in that it enables us to mold the young minds as they enter school…that molding enables them to*

> *develop into better persons, as they go on in their lives, and as they develop into adults.*

Ms. Joseph's perspective on teaching reveals an ethic of caring (Ayers, 2001) and so did her teaching practices, from my observations. The purpose of my research resonated with Ms. Joseph's deep sense of caring for the welfare of her students. This relationship may have been the factor that influenced her to allow me to conduct this research in her classroom. Ms. Joseph's interactions with me did not, at any time, reveal that she may have been coerced by the school principal or by some other means to allow me into her classroom. From my observations and conversations with Ms. Joseph, I can say that she was a teacher who displayed a deep sense of interest in educational research, knowing that schools are likely to benefit from it and, therefore, made my role as a researcher in her classroom even more worth the while.

Ms. Joseph taught a class of thirty academically "slow" children—including the three students I studied—whose ages ranged from 8 to 11. The children were screened in second grade before they were promoted to third grade, on the basis of achievement. However, there were varying degrees of language and literacy abilities in the classroom. This meant that they could not all read the same level of material for instructional purposes. The children who scored highest on the grade two test were in a separate third-grade classroom.

In terms of Ms. Joseph's basic approach to language and literacy education, she placed emphasis on whole class teaching. This was in keeping with the St. Lucian education system's traditional method of language and literacy education, which teachers have been encouraged to adhere to over the past decades. This whole class teaching appeared to have been based on a generic language arts program. The notion that reading is a linear process of letter-by-letter deciphering, sounding out, word identification and, finally, text comprehension (Hall, 2003) has prevailed for many years in the teaching of reading in St. Lucian primary schools. It was still evident in the classroom I observed.

Student Participants

Longitudinal studies of language development in school-age children establish that there is a strong relationship between oral language development and success at literacy (Loban, 1976; Juel, 1988). I purposefully selected a sample of basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students as the participants for this study over a sample of mesolectal (near to English) Creole-English-speaking students. My reason for making such a choice was that, as a teacher, I had observed that, generally, it was more difficult for basilectal-Creole-English students to learn to speak, read, and write English than it was for mesolectal-Creole-English students. Also, I chose basilectal-Creole-English students over Creole-French students because St. Lucian Creole French (Patois/Kwéyòl) is declining in usage due to contact with English. Consequently, Creole English is replacing Creole French as the most widely and most commonly spoken vernacular (Garrett, 2000). It therefore made more sense for me to select Creole-English speakers (particularly, basilectal-Creole speakers) rather than Creole French speakers for the study.

As described in Chapter One, I also specifically selected third-grade students because it is in third grade that St Lucian students begin the first year of their primary school education. This grade marks the end of the infant school and, at the same time, the beginning of the primary school system. It also marks the beginning of the Common

Entrance Examination period which ends in sixth grade and is designed to determine students' competence for entry into secondary schools. Also, it is generally the grade in which children's literacy difficulties are most likely to manifest themselves, and therefore most likely to be visible in the classroom. I selected three students, Peter, James, and John (pseudonyms), and their teacher, Ms. Joseph, as the participants in this study. A discussion on how I selected my participants follows.

Selection of Participants

My first visit to the school, which I considered the first loop of the research, was to select the participants for the study. Upon my arrival at the school, I spoke with the principal and I handed her a formal information letter, along with an informed consent form, which informed her of the purpose of my research—to gain a better understanding of the teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences that were provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected/Standard English language. The principal formally granted me permission to conduct research in the school. She then referred me to the two third-grade teachers whom she suggested that I consult myself in regard to the research. It should be noted that the procedure established in conducting research within the St. Lucian school system is different from that of Canada. In Canada, it is mandatory that teachers volunteer to participate in research. However, in St. Lucia, the onus rests on the principals to determine their participation. That is, depending on the organizational structure of a St. Lucian school, a principal can either inform a teacher about a research that needs to be (or might be) conducted in her/his classroom and the teacher has no choice but to accept the imposition or, the principal can allow the teacher to make that decision herself/himself. In my case, the teachers elected to participate; there was no pressure from the principal. I can recall the principal saying to me during our conversation: "Miss, you'll have to do this yourself." What I immediately gathered from the principal's assertion was that although she nominated the teachers for this venture, she did not want to face them herself lest they think that she was coercing them into it.

Immediately, I met with the teachers and introduced myself. In my introduction, I was careful not to give the teachers the slightest impression that the principal, in her absence, was asking them to accommodate me. I spoke with them about my research. Then, I handed each of them a formal information letter along with an informed consent form. In particular, I explained what I meant by selecting 'basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students' as my participants. I provided some examples of such a speech variety for them including: "Fall I fall" (meaning in Standard English, "I fell."), "Behave kò ou!" ("Behave yourself!"), "How many years you have?" ("How old are you?"). Both teachers were willing to accommodate me in their classrooms, but, from the conversations I had with them, I chose Ms. Joseph's class on the basis that her class, to a larger extent, seemed to contain the type of students I was looking for. A first-grade teacher who knew some of the students very well, since she had previously taught them and Ms. Joseph herself, took on the task of identifying appropriate students for me from Ms. Joseph's class—students whom they thought met my linguistic criteria. In order to make the selection of participants within the classroom context more effective, I suggested to Ms. Joseph a procedure that she could follow. First, she would inform her entire class of students about my purpose for being there: basically, I would be spending some time in their class not to teach but to observe how a few of them (three) were learning English language. Second, she would ask the students to indicate by show of hands whether they were willing to assist me in this venture. Finally, in doing so, she would identify the three students she had in mind, if they raised their hands.

The teacher then conducted this activity for the selection of the participants. What was remarkable was when the teacher asked for volunteers, the vast majority of hands were quickly raised. Fortunately, the three boys raised their hands. Then, the class teacher along with the first-grade teacher (as if in a random fashion) pointed and called out the names of the three students whom they had previously identified—Peter, James, and John. This strategy had a positive pay-off for my prospective participants because they viewed themselves as "the chosen few" and were happy about being granted that privilege. Also, this selection strategy helped to minimize the students' potential to view themselves as being stigmatized or stereotyped.

The next step in the research involved my contact with the students' parents. The information letters and informed consent forms were sent to the three students' parents by the principal, along with a note requesting that the parents come to the school to meet with me. The parents of all three students agreed to allow their children to participate in the research. However, I only met James' mother and John's mother. I casually spoke with the mothers to acquaint myself with them and at the same time to obtain any information regarding themselves and their children that was pertinent to the research.

My next goal was to assess the students' linguistic repertoire the following day—their oral language, writing, and reading performances—to confirm their language identity, that is, to find out whether they were basilect-dominant speakers of English.

Therefore, I had to first assess the students' performances in these areas of language to identify features that characterize St. Lucian basilectal-Creole English. I took one student at a time to the school library for assessment. It was an intense day for me in conducting a number of assessment activities, which lasted about an hour and a half with a short break in between, with each of the three students.

I started the assessment with Peter. First, I spoke to Peter in basilectal-Creole English with the hope of putting him at ease, and, particularly, to hear how he would respond. So, I said: "Peter, how you feeling—you well today, my boy?" Peter smiled and quickly said, "Yeah Miss I well." Again, to assess Peter's response, I asked in Standard English, this time: "Which language do you speak at home?" Peter understood but replied: "I spekin- English at home." Therefore, I continued in Standard English. I first explained to Peter what the assessment entailed—that I would like him to talk, write, and read so that I could learn more about his language. I conducted two oral activities which involved Peter's retelling of the story I read to him, entitled *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and four wordless picture charts which he talked about. Then, he was given a free-writing activity in which he could write about his favorite story and, lastly, he was asked to read the story from his second-grade textbook, entitled *Uncle Don's Visit*. I tape-recorded his talk and reading. I followed the same assessment procedure with the other two students. Basically, they responded in the same way. The students understood the basic things I discussed with them in Standard English. However, they all responded in basilectal-Creole English. After I finished the assessments, I transcribed and analyzed the data the following day. I also analyzed their writing. I analyzed the students' oral and written compositions for salient phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic features which characterized the basilectal-Creole-English vernacular. By vernacular is meant the "everyday, colloquial, informal" (Garrett, 2000, p. 66) speech of some St. Lucians.

The results revealed that all of the three students' oral and writing compositions contained features of the basilectal-Creole-English vernacular which clearly identified them as basilect-dominant speakers of English. For example, Peter's speech contained primarily English words, supplemented with some Patois/Creole French words, such as, "bonks" (meaning "hit") in "She *bonks* the boy with her ka," meaning "Her car hit the boy." The word "ka" (meaning "car") "is better dealt with as a dialectal difference between the West Indian territories than as a consonant cluster feature of Creole English" (Roberts, 1988, p. 57). I think what Roberts is saying is that such a word is better viewed from a phonological perspective rather than a structural perspective. However, Peter's speech revealed lots of morphosyntactic constructions in which auxiliary verbs were omitted, for example, "One man looking at the fish." Also, the -s and -ed forms of the verb were not used, for example, "The boy sit on the bed" and "They prick the fish." Another notable basilectal-Creole-English feature in Peter's speech was that the past participle form of the verb "happen" (though the -ed form was omitted) was combined with "that" rather than "had," as in "An officer came and see what *that* happen-." He did not use the past tense of the verb "come" consistently while talking about the same picture; compare his previous sentence with this one: "School chiren *come* by the road too." The word "chiren" (children) was analyzed as a phonological Creole-English feature, and also "ka" (car). Moreover, there was the occurrence of the Creole-French/Patios influenced structure in Peter's sentence: "He cover his self with a bath towel" (meaning in Standard English, "He wrapped a towel around himself"). In St.

Lucian basilectal-Creole English, the consonant digraph "th" is pronounced as "/d/" when it is the onset of a word, and "/f/" when it is the rime, as in Peter's retelling of the story: "*D*a livin wi*f* da mother." (meaning, "*Th*ey live wi*th* their mother.") In this same sentence, the personal pronoun of the third person "they" functions also as a possessive adjective/the possessive form of the personal pronoun, as in "da mother" rather than "their mother."

The other two students' speech, likewise, reflected features of basilectal-Creole English, from a lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic level. A remarkable Creole English construction from John was "Two chils (children) crossing the road," and from James, "The other one si-dong and their fishin." James meant, "The other one is sitting while he is fishing." It is interesting to note that all three students used the word "bonks" instead of "hit" when they talked about the same picture. In relation to another picture, two of the students—James and John—said, "mans" for "men" as in "The mans their playing cricket" and "The mans play cricket." The other student—Peter—said, "mens" for the same word "men" in "They had mens playing cricket on the fiel." Note also that the word "fiel" can be interpreted as the Patois/Creole French form of the English word "field." It can also reflect the fact that basilectal-Creole-English speakers in St. Lucia do not pronounce the 'd' sound at the end of the majority of words, other examples include: "chil-," "buil-," and so forth.

I analyzed the data regarding the students' writing and reading performances. I was unable to read John's writing piece because his spelling was so unconventional that it was impossible to construct meaning from his five sentences. For example, the first sentence John wrote was: "the god dinymachi me." I asked him to read that sentence to me and he said, "The dog runnin after me." John's interpretation reflected the morphosyntactic structure of basilectal-Creole English. This was Peter's story: "I we My me Mummy We reed rut." When I asked Peter to read his story to me, he sounded out each of the eight words. Peter's poor story structure did not convey meaning that allowed me to identify basilectal-Creole-English features in his writing. James wrote the following: "on look at my fish net My brand new lovely. Fish net I going and fish in the rive. One day Daddy and Mummy was on The bous. One Friday Miguel and Mummy was playing." A prominent morphosyntactic feature in basilectal-Creole English in St. Lucia is that the use of prepositions differs from that of Standard English, as in James' phrase: "going *and* fish," meaning "going *to* fish." The word "bous" seemed to have reflected either the lexical component of the basilectal-Creole English or the phonological component. Another feature of basilectal-Creole English is the absence of subject-verb agreement in speech, as in James' sentence: "One Friday Miguel and Mummy *was* playing."

In relation to their reading of the story based on *Uncle Don's Visit*, none of the students read in a comprehensible manner. They spent much of the time trying to decode the vast majority of words on the first page. They made few attempts to use the morphological, syntactic, and semantic cueing systems other than sounding out words occasionally. The students' inability to read the passage made it impossible for me to identify miscues in their reading that characterized the basilectal-Creole speech. However, the other assessment activities—the oral and written—compensated significantly for the loss of information from the reading assessment activity. Therefore, based on the analysis and interpretation of the students' speech and writing, I concluded that the students were, in fact, basilect-dominant speakers of English. A profile of each participant follows.

Profile of Student Participants

Peter

Peter, a nine-year-old basilectal Creole-English-speaking student, hailed from a single-parent family in a rural community in St. Lucia. He lived with his mother, Jenny (a pseudonym), and four older siblings: three brothers and one sister. Jenny's native language was Patois/Creole French but she spoke mainly Creole English to Peter and her other children. Peter, however, was a fluent Patois/Creole French speaker. Jenny could not read and write. She was the sole breadwinner of her family, and worked as a cook in a restaurant in Castries. Her work schedule required her to leave home very early for work and return late at nights, Monday through Saturday. To quote Peter, "When my mother live in the mornin I don see her, and she comin back when it dark." This meant that the responsibility of the home, for the most part, rested on Peter and his siblings' shoulders. Peter was well grown for his age and had no physical disabilities—he was a normal, strong-looking boy. Also, Peter had a very pleasant personality that encouraged me to interact with him.

In terms of his academic accomplishments, Peter first attended primary school at the age of five and was placed in a kindergarten class. He was a struggling reader and writer. His performance in literacy in grade three was at a first-grade level, although, according to his age, he should have been in a fourth-grade class. His school record revealed that Peter had repeated kindergarten after attaining 0% in his end of third term reading test and 10% in writing. His kindergarten teacher's comments in his school record regarding his extremely poor performance were: "In order for [Peter] to show greater improvement he has to repeat Kindergarten. He can be very slow at grasping simple concepts. Help him at home." The principal's comment to Peter's parents, "He must try to improve Reading, so buy him simple books to read during the vacation," revealed a great deal about the school's perception of the root of Peter's reading problems—that the home was to be held accountable. After repeating kindergarten, Peter attained 53% in all the language arts strands combined—reading, comprehension, composition/essay, phonics/word study, spelling/dictation, grammar and usage, handwriting, and study skills. Peter's overall grade was *C*. According to the school's Rating Scale, Peter's overall grade was satisfactory. The teacher's comment about Peter's performance when he repeated kindergarten read: "[Peter] tries, but needs to show more interest in his work." The principal's comments read: "He has shown some improvement. With your help, parents, he can make greater progress."

In the final term in grade 1, Peter attained extremely low test scores in reading and comprehension and writing/composition. In reading and comprehension, Peter scored 33%. According to the school's Rating Scale, Peter's score was equivalent to a grade *E*. In writing, he scored 0% (*E*). Peter's overall grade was *E*, meaning, more effort required. The teacher's comment in Peter's school record book regarding his performance was: "[Peter] worked very poorly this term. He is a rude child who does not like to be corrected. Parents, assist him in changing this attitude. Help him to do a lot of reading as this is very important." The principal's comment about Peter read, "Encourage [Peter] to do some extra work at home especially in mathematics and composition."

Peter failed all his tests in the various language arts areas on his first term test in grade 2. In particular, Peter obtained 20% in reading and comprehension and 10% in writing. Again, Peter's overall grade was *E*. The teacher's comments were: "[Peter] is a slow child. However he tries very hard in class. He also has to change his rude behaviour. Encourage him at home." The principal wrote this comment: "Parents must talk to [Peter] about changing his attitude as this affects his ability to do better." Moreover, the 2005 Grade 2 Minimum Standards Test report revealed that Peter was extremely weak in English language. He attained 6% only as his overall score in the subject. However, the remarkable things I discovered about Peter was that, in spite of his inability to read, he was ever so eager to learn and take risks in reading his text or from the blackboard. He often participated in class activities and tried so hard to read that it was amazing.

James

James was eleven years old. Like Peter, James was from a rural, working-class background, and spoke basilectal-Creole English. He grew up with his mother and father, Anna and Roy (pseudonyms) along with five brothers and three sisters. Both Anna and Roy were Patois/Creole French speakers but spoke mainly basilectal-Creole English to James and his siblings. James, however, was a fluent Patois speaker. Anna and Roy could not read and write. They were very busy farmers who worked in the fields almost every day from sun-up to sundown. James and his older and younger siblings assumed the responsibility of the home in their parents' absence. At school, James was quite neatly dressed. He loved to smile and was quite mature in his deportment in class and within the wider school community. However, he seldom participated in class activities voluntarily or spoke in class, except when he quietly spoke to his peers who sat beside him, or when the class teacher called upon him. He was, one can say, a well disciplined student. Nevertheless, when James was sent to school, he would not go. He stayed away from school very often. He seemed to have enjoyed the company of other people instead—some older boys, I was told by the teacher, who were truants themselves. To make matters worse, James sometimes slept away from his home without his parents' consent. With respect to James' behavior, Anna, with much frustration, said to me, "Miss, I don know what to do wif dis boy argain!"

In relation to his academic performance, James, like his other siblings, first attended school at a very late age. James' parents first sent him to school at age eight. He was placed in a kindergarten class where his school record revealed that he had been putting a lot of effort into his work and had passed his language arts tests in kindergarten. However, the record also showed that he had been absent from school for 30 days in term one of first grade. It also revealed that he failed his language arts tests, having scored 42%. He then worked hard and performed a lot better in language arts on the second term test, with an overall score of 72%. By the end of first grade, however, a break-down of his scores in language arts revealed that James had performed poorly in reading, having scored 17%. During that term, James had been absent 14 times. The class teacher's and the principal's comments on James' school record reflected their great concern toward James. For example, the teacher wrote, "[James] tries very hard but is weak in reading. [James] needs extra help at home. Parents, this is the result of not sending [James] to school. Play your part and send [James] to school regularly." The principal wrote, "Parents, try to be serious about [James'] education. Send him to school and help him to read." Seemingly, these comments had no impact on Anna and Roy: the record shows that the number of times James was absent from school in the second term of second grade was 36; he was late five times. In fact, he did not write the second term tests because he was absent from every one of them.

John

The last of my three student participants was eight-year-old John. He, too, was from a rural, working-class background, and was a basilect-dominant-English speaker. However, John was fluent in Patois. He was raised in a single-parent family: his mother, Violet, and three brothers. Violet's native language was basilectal-Creole English, however, she was fluent in Patois. She could not read and write. She worked as a cleaner in an office in Castries and was more or less the sole breadwinner for the family. John's school uniform was quite neat. He appeared to be shy and mute whenever his teacher called upon him for a response in a lesson. He hardly participated in class activities. However, the day would not end without him disrupting the class to such an extent that the teacher would need to coerce him into silence. He and another carefree little boy—little in stature compared to John—who sat beside him were usually involved in some kind of playful pushing, even when Ms. Joseph was right before their eyes teaching. On his own, after Ms. Joseph moved his friend to another place in the classroom, John would hide under the desk and poke a child or two with his pencil. The child, usually a girl, would, in turn, yell: "Miss tell [John] not to do that; he prickin me wif his pencil." John would not utter a word; he would just quickly sit up and try to hide his dimpled face with his arms. Whenever it was time for seat work, he would go to the bin at the entrance to the class and sharpen his pencil for a long time until his teacher asked him to sit. While Ms. Joseph was explaining a concept from the blackboard, John, sitting at the end of the first row nearest to the blackboard, would literally turn his back to the board and, instead, play with his pencil. John's mother was very concerned about his behaviour and said she wished that she could do something about it.

John first attended formal school at five years old and was placed in a kindergarten classroom. I was unable to obtain John's school record book from his third-grade teacher because John brought it home to his mother and did not return it to his second-grade class teacher. Therefore, the third-grade teacher did not have John's record book, so, I do not have information about John's academic performance based on his school record. However, I consulted John's second-grade teacher about his past performance, since he had recently left her class and was promoted to the third-grade class. The teacher recounted that John attended school regularly but had great difficulty learning to read and write. He was disruptive and often failed to pay attention in class. My observations of John gave me the impression that he was unable to read his text, and that he was not at all interested in learning. Instead, John was interested in drawing; oh, how he loved to draw! At those times when John decided to behave himself during class, or perhaps when his desire for drawing came, one would see his back arched over his notebook on his desk drawing, passionately, with his pencil.

Data Collection Process

Merriam (1998) makes the point that "in qualitative study the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data and, as such, can respond to the situation by maximizing opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information" (p. 20). Thus, the use of multiple methods for data collection of a phenomenon—a process called *triangulation*—can enhance case study findings. In fact, "The more data collected, the stronger the foundation for the inductive analysis" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006, p. 402). This notion has been well established (Gay et al., 2006; Merriam, 1988, 1998; Schwandt, 2001; Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994, 2003). In the main, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) agree that "strategies of inquiry connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials. For example, the case study method relies on interviewing, observing, and document analysis" (p. 14). With these ideas in mind, I employed multiple methods of data collection which comprised classroom observations, reflective journal entries, document analysis, informal conversations, and interviews.

The second loop of the research process involves making informal observations of the classroom and the participants. So, the week following the selection of participants, I set off for the school to gather information to answer the research question: What teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences are provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language?

I began the study by informally observing the classroom in which the participants learned. I took on the role of passive observer rather than that of active participant observer. This meant that I assumed no responsibilities in the classroom setting. Consequently, I was able to focus more on my data collection. Reflecting on my role as observer, I realize that my observational experiences in the classroom were no different from those suggested by Boostrom's (1994): observer/researcher as videocamera, playgoer, evaluator, subjective inquirer, insider, and reflective interpreter.

Researcher as Videocamera

The researcher as videocamera takes in everything unselectively. For the first two days of my observations, I was open to any information that came by. Like Boostrom (1994), "I thought of myself as a 'sponge,' absorbing whatever I could in the classroom" (p. 53). I went to the classroom with no preconceived ideas about how my participants' experiences would be manifested, no pre-ordained framework into which to fit the events I witnessed. I only saw events within the general structure of the teacher, students, and subject matter, that is, at the most superficial level of formal relations (Boostrom, 1994). That is why I did not record any data per se. Instead, I became acquainted with the classroom milieu. I had informal conversations with the teacher, Peter, James, and John and, to a lesser extent, the rest of the third-grade students. I observed the classroom structure, and what went on there, from the standpoint of researcher as videocamera. I did more listening and watching than talking. I welcomed that opportunity to examine related documents, for example, my student participants' school record books. Somehow, within those two days, I was also able to build some level of trust and rapport between me and my participants and the rest of the class. This building of trust and rapport helped to put both parties—myself and the participants—at ease with each other from the beginning. Additionally, the discouraging reports that I got from the participants' school record books increased my curiosity about their language and literacy problems, as this problem formed the basis for my research. This curiosity served as a catalyst to my inquiry into my research questions. I, therefore, moved into the second stage of observation—researcher as playgoer.

Researcher as Playgoer

As I set off for the classroom to collect data, I was well equipped with a notepad for my field notes, a notebook as my reflective journal, checklists, a pen and pencil case, and my digital camera. My observations were formal, in the sense that I had clearly identified purposes for observing the setting. For example, my research question was clear in my mind and the checklist (see Appendix A) I prepared helped to give me focus. I can recall myself, vividly, playing the role of researcher as playgoer during my observations.

According to Boostrom (1994), the researcher as playgoer is caught up in the drama, following the story line. At the playgoer stage, which I also considered the third loop of the research, I became conscious about my role as a researcher—basically, to stay alert. My role as a researcher became interesting and significant, and the events in the classroom became noteworthy. I found myself engrossed in the affairs of the participants. By then, the participants became interesting and significant to me. Indeed, "I was drawn into their [the participants] lives as a playgoer is drawn into the lives of the *dramatis personae* [italics added]" (Boostrom, 1994, p. 54). I took field notes of my observations, that is, I recorded what I saw, heard, felt, and did through this course of observation. Also, I wrote a personal reflective journal that captured my personal reactions to my observations, my thoughts, and experience in the classroom. My transformation into playgoer can be viewed in my indignation during events which occurred in the classroom. This transformation is captured in my reflective journal:

Reflective journal entry—Thursday, October 6, 2005

Even when the teacher is actually teaching, one of my participants (John) and his friend are misbehaving. Well, well, those two boys have learned how to idle in class and disrupt the teacher's lessons—and other children who are well behaved too. I don't understand that! If as young as they are, they have learned to be so disrespectful, and just fiddle about, they are not too young to be disciplined either. I find these children need to learn to take responsibility for their learning. I can tell you, they're lucky that I'm not their teacher; I would deal with them. But, wait a minute; this is funny (I can't help laughing). I forgot what my role was for a moment (only an observer) and said aloud, "I agree with you, child!" I automatically said that when a child shouted, "Miss, beat him!" at the time the teacher, who seemed to be frustrated, held Tom by his collar a second time to take him to his seat.

Like Boostrom (1994), "I was such a playgoer, caught up in the action and taking sides, sharing in the emotions of the players" (p. 55). In other words, I was really drawn into the events that occurred in the classroom and cared about what the teacher, the other two participants (Peter and James), and the rest of the class were going through. The quality of my response was empathy toward the "good side," which can be construed as compliance with the norms of the school system.

Researcher as Evaluator

I also played the role of researcher as evaluator. According to Boostrom (1994), the researcher as evaluator is judgemental and responds to a situation by saying, "I would not do this in this way" (p. 55). Surprisingly, my experience as a language arts teacher, the checklists I had, and the exemplary methods of teaching presented in the literature which I espouse managed to overwhelm the purpose of the research that I set out to achieve—fundamentally, to gain a better understanding of three third-grade basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students' experiences in learning the Standard English language. Consequently, quite early in my observations, I began to pay more (but not close) attention to instances of what I considered bad pedagogical practice than of good, and made quick judgements. I could not help saying outright to myself, "If I were teaching this concept, I wouldn't do it this way."

At that stage, I was rather complacent (somewhat arrogant, perhaps) in my approach. I thought I had all the answers to the events and behaviours I had observed in the classroom. However, it was not long before I began to feel 'shortsighted' and, of course, the research being 'stifled.' The data I collected were so superficial and skimpy that I was almost in a state of panic. This negative effect was the alarm that woke me up from my slumber to delve deeply into the significance of events and behaviours which I had learned about, from a theoretical point of view. Immediately, I became 'farsighted' and, of course, very analytical in my approach. I began to look into the depth of events and ask "why" questions in order to create meaning from the participants' language learning experiences. This meant that I was bound to assume the role of researcher as subjective inquirer.

Researcher as Subjective Inquirer

The researcher as subjective inquirer, according to Boostrom (1994), asks, "What does it mean that they're doing this?" In other words, the 'why' questions are asked. My role as subjective inquirer is illustrated in my reflective journal entry. Relatively speaking, there, one can see that I was thorough and analytical in my observations of the participants' learning experiences.

> Reflective journal entry—Monday, October 24, 2005
>
> *Why, I said to myself, weren't many of the children making constructive fixations as they read? Was it because they were more interested in whatever they thought was happening around them and could not be bothered about reading? Or was it that they just could not read? What about Peter for example? Although the teacher used a really good strategy to help students grasp the 'ea' sound, however, I really wish she had placed more emphasis on pronouncing the 'ea' sound in a variety of words and sentences/paragraphs. Why I'm particularly concerned about the teacher teaching the basilectal-Creole-English-speaking children long and short vowel sounds is that the Creole language does not make a distinction between long and short vowel sounds—all vowels are short, so that the word "beach" (with a long 'e' vowel sound) would be pronounced as /bitch/ in Creole. This same pronunciation was realized as Peter repeated this word which a child uttered during the class exercise. Peter and the rest of the students needed to become aware of this important phonological feature in Standard English. Interestingly, the teacher used some Patois/Creole French expressions during the lesson. This really caught my attention, and I wondered why she did. Was it used to assist in the transfer of learning from one language to the other? I think those were free expressions to control behaviour because those expressions resulted when she was passing the plastic bag around for the children to dip for a word-card with the 'ea' sound; but some of the children were taking more than one*

> *word-card and were doing that very slowly. So, the teacher uttered: "Pa ma té la mew ah sou tout words la" (meaning, "Do not take all the words"). Also, "Feh vit!" (meaning, "hurry!"). All in all, it was a wonderful day; it was such a wonderful classroom to be in, the children were so friendly and so was the teacher. I'm glad my research has really gotten off its feet!*

Truly, like Boostrom (1994), by taking questions like these seriously, I was changing my stance as observer. My position as playgoer remained, and I continued to be interested in the events that I witnessed. However, from another vantage point, the scope of the play had changed. It now included the observer and my construction of the events. Also, according to Boostrom (1994), theoretically, I was beginning to realize that classroom experience is not something objective and measurable, not something 'out there.' Rather, it exists in the observer's formulations of it. The attempt to observe a classroom is as much a matter of interpreting as it is a matter of looking.

Researcher as Insider

For Boostrom (1994), this is the stage in which the researcher as insider does not take things for granted. Boostrom makes this conception clearer:

> "Understanding," "learning a new language," "becoming inducted into another way of life," these are expressions of the experience of moving inside. Only then can we see the "significances" as meaning and mattering, rather than as the peculiar mechanisms of a primitive tribe. (p. 62)

By then, my ability to pay attention to the significance of the participants' language learning experiences in the classroom had grown considerably. As a result, I gained a more profound insight into the lessons I observed and, more importantly, the misconceptions which I previously held were clarified. For example, the teacher taught the concept of 'number' (singular and plural) during a grammar lesson on October 12th. Assuming the role of researcher as evaluator at that time, I did not move into the lesson to see it as the teacher did, that is, I did not obtain more information from the teacher about the lesson in order to understand her perspective. Instead, I interpreted the lesson independent of the teacher and reacted negatively to the method that she had employed to teach the concept. The teacher revisited the concept of 'number.' It was at that point I realized that the lesson that the teacher taught on October 12th was, in fact, a review lesson. My role of researcher as insider, then, had enabled me "to look beyond;" I did not take things for granted any longer. Therefore, I questioned the teacher about the lesson. Hence, I was able to reconstruct the meanings I had acquired with respect to the participants' learning experiences on October 12th. This example I present here regarding my role of researcher as insider also made me assume Boostrom's (1994) last observational role, that is, researcher as reflective interpreter. One can see that there is an interplay between the two observational roles.

To sum up my role as observer in the classroom, my experiences are, in fact, congruent with Boostrom's (1994) own experiences in the classrooms he observed. That is, while each of these influences my theoretical framework, my personal history, and so on had a bearing on my subjectivity, and thus indirectly affected what I paid attention to, none of them pointed directly to these conclusions. No person, book, or event from my past could say, "There, that is what you should pay attention to" (p. 64). By far, guidance came from the classroom itself.

Interviews with Participants

The fourth loop of the research comprised interviews. I interviewed the classroom teacher twice: during and at the end of the data collection period, that is, October and December, 2005, respectively. The first interview lasted for approximately one hour, while the second lasted for half an hour. Also, I conducted one formal interview with each of the three students in December, 2005, but had on-going conversations with them in the classroom. The interview lasted for about thirty minutes.

I utilized two types of interview methods to collect data. First, I used conversational interviews which emerged from the immediate context during the data collection process. That is, I asked the participants questions during the natural course of events which occurred in and out of the classroom. Interviews with young students can be difficult, contends Nawrot (1998, p. 100). Therefore, aside from talking with the participants while they were doing seat work in the classroom, I talked with them during those times that they were more relaxed and did not care too much about me observing them, for example, during break or play time. For instance, Peter sometimes played school with his peers during lunch break. He seemed to like playing the "teacher" role. I noticed also that Peter and his peers usually did some kind of math activity on the blackboard. When this happened, I asked him what he was doing on the board. He enthusiastically said, "Ma*fa*matics." I further asked him whether he liked mathematics, and he joyfully said: "Yeah Miss." I then asked him why. He replied, "You getting a lot of fon" (fun). I then left the school pondering the things Peter had said to me.

The other type of interview I used with my participants during and after the data collection process was the general interview guide approach—an approach which involved predetermination of question topics or wording. The following is a sample of questions I used in the interviews with the three students: "When you are reading and you see a word that you do not know, what do you do?" "Do you think you are a good reader?" "Why or why not?" "Do you enjoy talking about a topic during language arts to your teacher and the children in your class?" "Why or why not?" The questions I asked the teacher from the general interview guides were open-ended, for example, "What instructional program has been developed for language and literacy learners whose native language is not Standard English?" Ellis (1998) posits, "A particular strength of the questions is their open-endedness. They avoid eliciting specific factual information. Instead, they invite interviewees to search for memories or thoughts they would like to talk about" (p. 37). In addition, Mishler (1986) encourages researchers to listen to the respondents' fully by allowing them to continue in their way until they indicate they have finished their answer; this gives respondents a chance to completely tell their stories. I bore Mishler's interview technique in mind and applied it during the interviews. It was beneficial. A very important activity that accompanies data collection is the data analysis and interpretation activity.

Data Analysis and Interpretation Process

Merriam (1998) posits:

> Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning. (p. 178)

I analyzed and interpreted the data which included field notes from observations, reflective journal entries, informal conversations, examination of documents, and interviews. I used the inductive analysis and creative synthesis strategy to analyze the data. This analysis strategy required me to immerse myself in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships, and to end with a creative synthesis of the analyzed data (Patton, 2002). This method of analysis is theoretically sound because Merriam (1998) also explains that in the analysis of qualitative research, "The analysis usually results in the identification of recurring patterns (in the form of categories, factors, variables, themes) that cut through the data or in the delineation of a process" (p. 11).

In analyzing and interpreting the data, first, I transcribed the interviews that I had tape-recorded. Next, I organized the data according to the different types of field notes, for example, those obtained from observations of the setting, reflective journals, informal conversations, examination of documents, and interviews, and labeled each type. Based on the research question, I created categories which, in turn, yielded themes. I recorded those categories and themes and noted instances of them from the data. In other words, based on the data, I described those categories in juxtaposition with their themes, as a foundation for constructing meaning from those findings. Overall, the research question guided the analysis of the data.

Lastly, based on the literature review, the theoretical framework, and my professional experiences, I interpreted the findings, in relation to the research question. That is, I explained the findings, answered 'why' questions, and attached significance to particular findings (Merriam, 1998). This meant that data analysis and interpretation was ongoing. Boostrom (1994) talks of the need for data analysis and interpretation to be concurrent with the data collection process. He asserts:

> The problem of observing is not simply that words and deeds do not come with handy tags for easy categorization. The problem is that words and deeds themselves have to be seen, understood, and described. The interpretation [therefore] does not begin only after a bedrock of 'data' has been collected; it begins the moment the observer walks into the classroom. As the observer changes, so do the data. (p. 58)

Throughout the data analysis and interpretation process, I periodically checked with Ms. Joseph to clarify information or collected new data. For instance, in terms of the oral language usage component viewed against the backdrop of the checklist, the analysis and interpretation of the data had informed me of the need for the participants to be given experiences in expressing themselves through various speech acts such as, constructive conversations, discussions, reports, and other kinds of talk that are necessary in a third-grade language arts classroom, since the data themselves had not revealed such instances. Therefore, I became more alert for instances of such experiences.

To conclude, qualitative researchers have to deal with the dilemma that lies in the heart of their work: if qualitative researchers look too narrowly, they will see little and may learn nothing from the environment they study, having limited their results to the questions they posed. If, on the other hand, they do not attempt to limit their focus, they may see too much and still learn nothing, becoming swamped by an ocean of details (Boostrom, 1994). I guarded against either of these extremities and created a state of equilibrium, with respect to the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the dissertation.

Ethical Considerations

I complied with the *University of Alberta Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants*—established for all students conducting research—in order to protect the participants' well-being and identity in the study. Having obtained approval from the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta to conduct the research, I formally contacted the principal of the primary school in which I conducted the research. I thoroughly discussed the purpose of the research with the principal after which she expressed her willingness (verbally and on the informed consent form attached to the information letter) to allow me the use of her school to conduct the research. I also formally contacted the participants myself—the class teacher and three students—and the parents of the students who were participants. I discussed the purpose of the study with the participants and handed the teacher an information letter to which the informed consent form was attached. The class teacher and students expressed their willingness to be participants in the study. The principal gave the student-participants information letters, to which informed consent forms were attached, for their parents. The parents of all of the three students consented to my request and allowed their children to participate in the study.

My discussions and information letters addressed issues of anonymity and confidentiality. In particular, the information letters explicitly stated that the participants were free to withdraw from the study if they felt threatened in any way during the course of the study. Finally, I strongly think I have established a trusting relationship with my participants, and brought to all of them the compassion and respect which they deserve (Ellis, 1998).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

"... A Journey into a St. Lucian Classroom"

The major purpose for conducting this qualitative case study was to gain a better understanding of the teaching approaches and learning opportunities or experiences that were provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three third-grade basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected/Standard English language. The research question was: What teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences are provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language?

Constructivist researchers focus on the specific contexts (that is, attending to the bigger "picture") in which people live, work, and learn in order to understand the historical, social, cultural, and educational settings of the participants. Hence, from a methodological standpoint, Ellis (2006) acknowledges the importance of working holistically, that is, attending to and understanding whole-part relationships (macro-micro relationships) in qualitative research studies. She says that it can be difficult to appreciate the significance of how a child experiences language learning, for example, or interpret confidently the child's language learning experiences, without some sense of the context in which the child's experiences are situated. Peter, James, and John's language and literacy learning experiences were, in fact, embedded within a larger frame or context. Hence, it was critical to pay attention to that context, which included the teaching-learning environment and the language and literacy teaching approaches and learning opportunities provided in the classroom. Critical to this chapter also are my perspectives, as the researcher, on the language and literacy teaching approaches that were provided by the teacher. In addition, it is important to present the three students' perspectives on their language and literacy experiences in the classroom.

The Language and Literacy Context: The Classroom Environment

The classroom was separated from other classrooms by walls thick enough to prevent any significant transmission of noise from one classroom to another. Other classrooms in the school were divided by blackboards. The classroom was approximately twenty-five feet square. From about four feet up from the floor level, the side walls of the classroom were made with decorative blocks of a ventilating design. This design allowed for light to enter the classroom and kept the classroom reasonably ventilated. Viewed from the back of the classroom, there were two doors to the extreme front and back on the right side wall of the classroom. The flooring, which was concrete, was about six inches up from the ground, and had a glazed surface which gave it a smooth finish. The blackboard was about six to seven feet wide and about three and a half feet high, and was affixed to the wall.

There were five rows of desks and chairs on each of the two sides of the classroom with each desk accommodating four students. The desks were of a sturdy floor-fixed design with arborite covered chipboard surfaces and cast iron bases. Each desk had four permanent orange coloured 45° swivel plastic chairs. There was one main disadvantage with this design since it did not allow students to sit together at one desk or table for group work (see Figure 4.1). In fact, Ms. Joseph spoke about this design as one of the things she disliked about the physical environment of her classroom. She remarked:

> *Well, in terms of the structure...the desks and chairs are cemented in the floor and we cannot move about to put the children to work into groups as they are supposed to. It's very difficult because they can't be moved about; most times when they are doing group work, some of them have to be standing around the table, or we put extra chairs around—that's how it is.*

Figure 4.1. Students working in a group

In addition, the structure of those desks and chairs created very limited space, making it difficult for the teacher to maneuver in the classroom, especially between the desks, to reach some students (those who sat in the middle) with ease.

The teacher's moveable desk and chair were located at the back of the classroom about five feet away from the door, and were approximately six feet from the last row of seats. Two small mesh-faced wooden bookcases, containing a few reference materials and a few teaching aids, stood adjacent to each other against the left side wall of the classroom. One continuous strip of white lacy material covered the tops of both bookcases with two clay vases of yellow, white, and green flowers on the extreme ends and a small attractive red plastic tray (containing some pencils and strips of white paper) and a small pile of exercise books and notebooks between the two vases. This decoration helped to make the classroom environment 'student-friendly' and picturesque.

Further, the words the students used in their language arts lessons were written on cards depicting a variety of shapes and colors, for example, ducks, rectangles, and so on. A beautifully designed poster displaying the message "Welcome to Grade 3" stood out in bold letters beside the blackboard, with a chart above it highlighting "Our class Rules." There were five class rules. These rules included 1. Respect each other; 2. Keep the classroom clean; 3. Speak one at a time; 4. Raise a hand to make a point; and 5. Pay attention in class. As is common in St. Lucia, these rules were formulated solely by the teacher. (Figure 4.2 shows a floor plan of Ms. Joseph's classroom.)

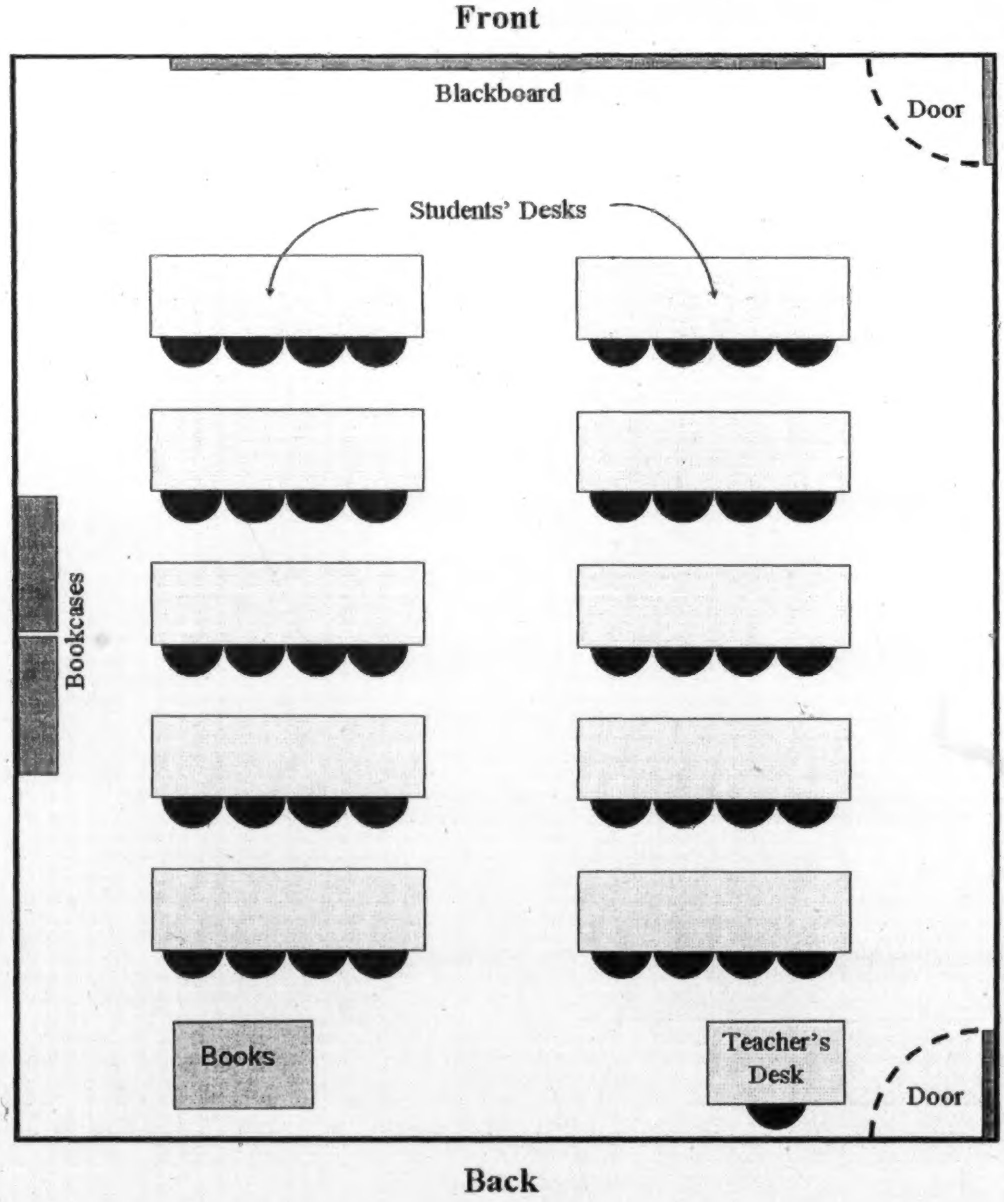

Front
Blackboard
Door
Students' Desks
Bookcases
Books
Teacher's Desk
Door
Back

Figure 4.2. Classroom floor plan

There was not a classroom library per se. However, one would find a few accessible materials displayed on a table in a haphazard manner at the back of the classroom such as picture storybooks and big books. The students' school bags were kept either beside them or on the last two unoccupied desks at the back of the classroom.

Among the classroom materials were three texts that formed an integral part of the classroom learning environment. The texts were entitled *Reading and Writing Every Day*; *Workbook*; and *Activity Book*. The St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports took on the initiative to produce the *Reading and Writing Every Day* reader in 2000 and the other two textbooks in 2005. These texts were prescribed for third-grade levels in the school and other primary schools throughout St. Lucia. They formed a part of the new series of textbooks, called *Caribbean Language Arts Project*, designed for each grade level from kindergarten to grade 6 in St. Lucia. The back cover of both the workbook and activity book provides a detailed description and a broad understanding of the special textbooks used in the classroom environment. The revision team, the publisher, the series of textbooks, and each of the three third-grade textbooks were listed. A detailed description of each book cover follows:

Caribbean Language Arts Project

The Caribbean Language Arts project materials have been thoroughly revised by teams of experienced, practicing Primary School teachers and officers of the St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports as a cooperative venture with Macmillan Caribbean. They build on earlier materials prepared by the Curriculum and Materials Development Unit of the Ministry of Education in St. Lucia.

The main content of the new series is drawn from the everyday lives of the children, with great use made of people, objects and scenes in the immediate environment. The content is closely linked to the St. Lucian language arts curriculum, and offers a complete graded development of language arts skills.

The series includes for each grade level from Kindergarten to grade 6:

- *Full-colour Activity books*
  These contain a wealth of challenging and interesting activities for children to complete in their exercise books. The activities encourage cooperative learning and skills of record keeping.
- *Comprehensive Workbooks*
  The fill-in workbooks allow the teacher and care-givers to assess the progress of individual children. When children have completed all the exercises, the completed workbooks form an excellent record and reference for future grades.
- *Full-colour Readers*
  With lively Caribbean stories, these also include lists of new words and, at the higher levels, comprehension exercises and additional activities.

The St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports' (2000) third-grade reader says:

> The *Caribbean Language Arts Project* has been devised, piloted and thoroughly tested in primary schools by the Curriculum and Materials Development Unit of the St. Lucia Ministry of Education. The course takes the child through the three distinct, but interrelated, elements of language learning: oral communication (listening and speaking), reading

> and writing. The main content in all the books is drawn from the everyday lives of the children with great use made of people, objects and scenes in the immediate environment. (Back Cover)

A common thread that linked all three texts is that the texts were all designed to assist third-grade teachers in promoting St. Lucian students' English language arts development in their classroom learning environment. With this common purpose of the textbooks in mind, emphasis was placed on the notion of 'culturally relevant pedagogy' (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally relevant pedagogy, according to Ladson-Billings, encourages teachers to discover the cultural referents that are relevant to their students in the communities in which they teach, and to bring in examples and experiences from their students' cultural heritage into their classrooms. When teachers make a conscious effort to provide such culturally-relevant materials and experiences in their classroom learning environment, the learning of concepts becomes more authentic and, thereby successful as students are given the opportunity to identify with their familiar surroundings within the classroom setting.

The notion of culturally relevant pedagogy runs through the textbooks in several ways: the predominantly black race which forms more than 90% of St. Lucia's population is featured on the front covers of the books and in the content material. Also, the stories, objects, and scenes used in the textbooks reflect mainly the St. Lucian culture, as indicated on the back covers of the textbooks. To reiterate: "The main content in all the books is drawn from the everyday lives of the children with great use made of people, objects and scenes in the immediate environment." The front cover and extracts from the

St. Lucian third-grade textbooks revealing the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy are found in Appendix B.

A visitor to Ms. Joseph's classroom could not help but notice a colourful environment. An array of colorful charts were either posted on the wall or hung from clotheslines across the classroom. These pertained to various core subject-area displays such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, health science and general science. There were language arts and mathematics displays on the left side of the wall, and the social studies, health science and general science ones were on the right side. Just above the language arts and mathematics area displays were the months of the year written on yellow and purple rabbit-shaped cutouts arranged in single file on the brick wall. To the right of this train of word cards were seven pineapple-shaped cards fancifully displaying the days of the week. The back wall of the classroom was bare. Figure 4.3 below is representative of a language arts chart displayed in the classroom.

Parts of a Sentence

A *sentence, sentence, sentence*
Is *complete, complete, complete*
When five simple rules
It *meets, meets, meets*
It has a *subject, subject*
And a *verb, verb, verb*
It makes *sense, sense, sense*
With every *word, word, word*
Add a capital letter
And end *mark, mark*
Now our sentence has all its parts.

Figure 4.3. Sample language arts chart (1)

I found this language arts chart had the potential to engage the students through the rhyme and rhythm of the verse. An impression I got was that Ms. Joseph made a conscious effort to provide a text in the classroom that contained repetitive words, rhythmic language patterns, and familiar concepts—a predictable text (Burns et al., 1999)—that could foster students' ability to learn the content material she provided in the classroom. This is what Ms. Joseph said about the text she displayed: "I got this idea from…somewhere [chuckles]; it emphasizes some of the words—the words I want them to know about and the children can see the words and… remember the words." Ms. Joseph's strategy was in keeping with Burns et al. suggested techniques to improve retention, that is, a teacher can improve students' ability to retain content material by encouraging them to look for words and ideas that are mentioned repeatedly, because they are likely to be important ones. Also, when appropriate, a teacher can encourage students to develop mnemonic devices. Figure 4.4 is representative of another language arts chart displayed in the classroom.

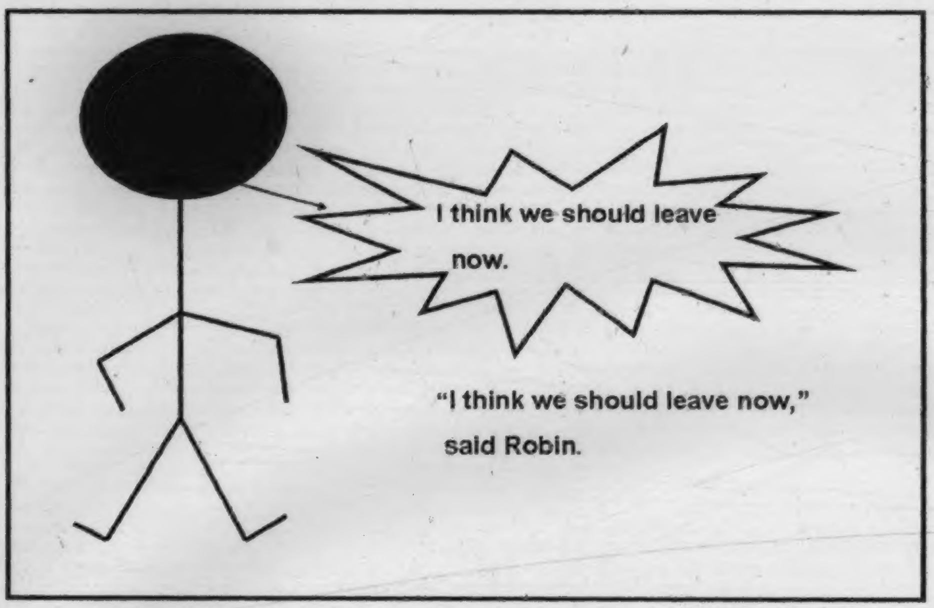

I think we should leave now.
"I think we should leave now," said Robin.

Figure 4.4. Sample language arts chart (2)

According to Ms. Joseph, this chart was designed to help the students understand and recall the punctuation marks she taught them. The image on the chart was appropriate in demonstrating the use of quotation marks to the students. The chart showed how to report the direct speech of the speaker and the type of language the writer used (Standard English). Ms. Joseph explained how she went about constructing her subject area displays. She said:

> *Well, we have a corner for each subject, mathematics, language arts, health science, social studies, general science and…we put up those corners so that we can put up charts pertaining to that subject in that corner, or anything else that we have pertaining to that lesson.*

Designing the classroom learning environment in that manner had its benefits, according to Ms. Joseph:

> *Yeah, in a way in that…they know everything that has to do with social studies. They go to those charts. They know what social studies entails. If we are doing health, they know what health entails, like if you are doing food and information about the body, they'll see that they all relate. If you are doing language, they see all language materials are in one corner so that they'll see the sentences, they'll see the words and they'll…it will enable them to…understand what that subject entails.*

A major benefit that Ms. Joseph outlined above was that such a classroom learning environment would help students to develop knowledge and understanding of subject matter. On one occasion, I observed that this classroom arrangement was indeed useful to the students. While the class was doing a group activity (using words in sentences) during a lesson, I saw that a group of students had difficulty spelling the word 'coconut.' Suddenly, some of them remembered the social studies area display and dashed to the right side of the class where a fruit chart was placed. They looked up the fruit chart with colourful pictures of fruits and their names and came across the picture of a coconut. They noted its spelling, and dashed back to their group, repeatedly spelling the word out loud, "C-o-c-o-n-u-t—co-co-nut." Then, the students continued to write their sentence with the word 'coconut' correctly spelled.

This spelling scenario highlighted the importance of both the physical and social-emotional environment of the classroom that Ms. Joseph created as the children felt comfortable moving about the room searching out the resources they needed. The subject-area structure of Ms. Joseph's classroom learning environment had once supported the students' spelling and promoted their social and interpersonal skills to a certain degree. To sum up, essentially, Ms. Joseph designed the classroom learning environment to support her students' language and literacy learning as effectively as she could.

Ms. Joseph's Expressed Philosophy of Language and Literacy Instruction

The teacher plays a key role in the success of language arts opportunities provided within the classroom learning environment. The role of the teacher from a social constructivist perspective is that of facilitator of instruction. As Vygotsky (1978) points out, the teacher must ensure that children have social interaction. Lenski and Nierstheimer (2004) assert that "it is important for us as teachers to articulate what we believe about literacy [or language] teaching and learning and why" (p. 29). They also say that teachers' beliefs underpin their philosophy of learning, and that their philosophy impacts their teaching practices and effectiveness. So, what teachers do within the classroom context is directed by their philosophy. Teachers' philosophies can evolve from their own experiences as learners and the knowledge they gain through study and practice. Theories of language arts learning, for example, social constructivism, are the frame for teachers' philosophies of language arts learning (Lenski & Nierstheimer, 2004).

I was, therefore, interested in ascertaining Ms. Joseph's philosophy of language and literacy instruction, and the theory which underpinned her philosophy. This is what Ms. Joseph remarked about her theoretical approach:

> *We don't really use…one theoretical approach. Probably, we use a mixture of various approaches, and…we use this approach regularly…we use this program that we call the CETT [Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training] program. What it does is that it says that when we are teaching the English language, we are supposed to start with a passage—a story, a big book…that they call it; start with this big book that's supposed to have…all the requirements that we need to teach the children; all the concepts they need to know for that particular passage. So we use that passage. In that passage, we do our vocabulary, we do our grammar, we do our punctuation, we do our comprehension from that same passage.*

She went on to say,

> *Well, I think oral language—in the CETT program—we are also supposed to be using the big book…with it; we are also supposed to help the children speak properly; we do our grammar, our sentence structure, we also use…the same story that we use for the week…to help them develop their oral language, and I think it's good.*

Ms. Joseph indicated that her philosophy of language arts teaching and learning had evolved from the CETT program. The CETT program started in 2001 to improve the ability of teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean to better teach reading to young children in the early grades (1-3). United States Agency for International Development (USAID) led this effort on behalf of the U.S. government who initiated the effort.

I was aware that the CETT training program had emphasized the need to improve teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills for reading instruction, paying special attention to the target population which included many bilingual/bidialectal students. This meant that teachers needed methods for better reaching bilingual students, for example, basilectal-Creole-English students in St. Lucia. A key method, as recommended extensively in the literature (Craig, 1983; Delpit, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Roberts, 1988; Siegel, 1999), would be for primary schools to accept and allow Creole-English learners to use their native language whenever possible in the classroom. Siegel (1999), in particular, makes mention of an accommodation program that can be incorporated within the regular language arts program to facilitate students' learning of Standard English. Siegel's (1999) review of an accommodation program is one in which the Creole vernacular is not used as a medium of instruction, but is fully accepted in the classroom. Additionally, Ladson-Billings' (2002) theoretical construct of "culturally relevant pedagogy" is possibly appropriate for teachers of diverse classrooms, although it is important to know that this construct is not normally addressed in St. Lucian teacher education, nor is there coverage of the need to incorporate children's first languages and dialects into instruction.

My next question directed at Ms. Joseph was to ascertain whether such a program was being employed in the school, specifically to meet the needs of basilectal-Creole-English learners. Ms. Joseph replied, "There's no program, we [teachers] just allow them [Creole-English learners] to talk whenever they choose to. There's no set program." From a personal standpoint, Ms. Joseph remarked: "Well, I don't have a problem with that. Actually, I encourage them to use the Creole in the classroom." Referring to the principal's perspective on this issue, she said,

> *Well, she [principal] always encourages us to explain whatever it is that we are trying to explain to them as best as we can; it doesn't matter what language it is, as long as they can understand. So, we explain it in Patois and then we explain it in English to them.*

Ms. Joseph explained how she allowed the students access to their native language in the classroom:

> *For example, when they talk to their friends in the class, if they are speaking...if they are using the Creole, I will not interrupt their talk...if I ask them something and they want to answer me in Creole, that's ok too.*

I also wanted to know what Ms. Joseph's belief was about allowing the students to use their native language during an oral language lesson, in particular. She said, "Yes, I do, as long as it's the correct answer; as long as they understand whatever it is that they are saying."

I asked Ms. Joseph for her perspectives on the teaching and learning of St. Lucian Standard English. With no hesitation, she voiced her opinion:

> *Standard English is what we use in our country; that's our language, and then when they are writing their exams...examinations are always in Standard English. Well, I think that they [students] need to understand the language; they need to understand the structure of the language; the*

> *grammar of the language; and then I think that they need to be able to read and understand whatever it is that they are reading.*

I also wanted to know what Ms. Joseph thought about the teaching of oral language, as distinct from the teaching of literacy. She declared,

> *Ok, oral language, I think is very, very important, especially with the slow children that I have. I think they need a lot, a lot, a lot of practice in using the English language orally. When they can do that, then they'll be able to write better because I'm trying to make them...talk a lot. Most of the time we talk, we discuss meanings of words, use them in sentences orally. I'm trying to do a lot of that, and then after that we usually...probably use the same words in some sentences on their own. Well, I think that it's going to help them understand the meaning of the word better, and able to use it when they are talking. Generally, in class and...with their friends and colleagues when they speak.*

At that point, I wondered about the language arts school curriculum itself and how it might provide a window through which to further view Ms. Joseph's philosophy of teaching and learning of St. Lucian Standard English. Ms. Joseph gave a description of the language arts school curriculum. She said:

> *It's divided into three areas—reading, listening and speaking, and writing. The reading focuses on a lot of phonics; there's a section on comprehension and there's also a vocabulary section. And it also has a little part which deals with developing their attitude and getting them motivated in the materials that they read, being able to choose their own material and their own story, and to talk*

> *about it. And the listening aspect of it has a lot of speaking and listening, a lot of oral…grammar, particularly, it has a lot of…grammar aspect comes in there where the children have to use grammatically correct sentences, and it has sentence construction: being able to speak properly, constructing their sentence the right way. The writing portion of it deals with the writing, the writing process, enabling the children to write a lot of compositions and stories. That's basically it.*

Ms. Joseph went on to say, "The curriculum entails quite a lot and I think it's a very good program, because it takes into consideration all aspects of the language arts that the children are supposed to be doing." As the language arts teacher responsible for providing literacy experiences for Peter, James, and John, it was important that Ms. Joseph explain her definition of literacy. To reiterate Ladson-Billings's (1992) definition of literacy: "Literacy has come to mean different things to different people in different contexts" (p. 380). Ms. Joseph's definition of literacy reflected a functional notion of literacy which, in turn, reflects the St. Lucian primary school system. Ms. Joseph articulated:

> *Well, I think literacy has a lot to do with reading and also writing. But…to me, it really has to do with the reading aspect of it—being able to read better. To me, if you can read and if you are a good reader, you'll be able to write properly because unless you can read, you won't be able to write, ok, the reading comes with the writing.*

Ms. Joseph illustrated that the reading-writing connection formed the basis of her definition of literacy. Further explanation allowed Ms. Joseph to explain her definition of reading as a distinct language arts strand. She said:

> *To me reading is a very, very broad subject area, but then…to me, reading has a lot to do with…understanding the material that you are given to read because if you just call out the words and then you have not understood whatever it is that you have read, you have not read it because you just read the words, and you cannot understand. But the problem is sometimes, if you tell them what is on the paper, they will understand. So, the thing is they have to be able to read the words, be able to identify words in order for them to be able to read and understand whatever it is that they have to read, because if they don't know what the words are, they cannot read it and, therefore, they will not be able to understand what it is. If you tell them they will understand, but the thing is they cannot read it on their own.*

From the above excerpt, it appears that thoughts about the students' inability to read had preoccupied Ms. Joseph's mind. Her concerns about the students' reading ability resurfaced as she emphasized the importance of the teaching of reading/literacy:

> *Well, I think it is very, very important. Literacy…the children I have are not able to read very, very, well because…they have a lot of difficulty in remembering words and…they have a lot of difficulty in memory and in retaining things. They have a lot of problems in retaining. Literacy is very, very important because without that you can't move forward in life,*

> *especially these days. You need to be able to read and that is very, very important. The children that I have, I have to try my best to help them to read. They need a lot of practice with words and they need to be able to see those words every day so that they will be able to remember it and we use them in our reading so that they will be able to read better.*

What is important is Ms. Joseph's statement: "Literacy is very, very important because without that you can't move forward in life, especially these days." Ms. Joseph's statement reveals her belief that literacy is socially and culturally important. Ms. Joseph clearly wanted to meet the needs of all her students so that all her students would be able to function independently in a literate society and make significant contributions to it. Additionally, Ms. Joseph's statement carried a subtle reference to the class system that is present within St. Lucian society.

Growing up, it was my desire to make teaching my profession because I wanted to help children to learn to read and write and, back then, as a primary school teacher, I knew that the extraordinary responsibility of helping my students learn to read and write rested heavily upon my shoulders. With this teaching memory in mind, I invited Ms. Joseph to share her own philosophy of teaching as a profession:

> *Well, I think teaching is a very interesting subject and, it has its ups and downs. I enjoy it sometimes, but sometimes you can get frustrated with the children. I try not to be too much. But then I think it is a good profession, in that, it enables us to mold the young minds as they enter school up to…well, that molding enables them to develop into better persons, as they go on…in their lives, and as they develop into adults.*

Ms. Joseph's Perspectives on Language and Literacy Teaching Approaches and Learning Opportunities

My aim in this section is to describe Ms. Joseph's methods of instruction and demonstrate the learning experiences she provided for Peter, James, and John. Ms. Joseph provided me with a detailed description of the class of students to which Peter, James, and John belonged:

> *Well, for my class, I know I have a group of very, very, slow children. They need a lot of practice in everything that...they have to do. They don't move as fast as the other kids; as the other grade-three class; they're very slow. So, I have to pace myself according to the level they are at...and I'm trying not to move too fast with them; we just do a little at a time. For example, if we have a story, I don't do the whole of it one time. The other grade-three children will probably read the entire story in a day/two. As I noticed this week...we are at the same story...and by now...they [the other third-grade students] are at the end of it. But my class, I'm just on the first paragraph with them, in the two days; we're still on the first paragraph, and I'm helping them learn the words and use them in their own sentences before they can move on—at their own pace. I'm not going to make them read the entire thing in a day/two; maybe by the end of Friday, they'll reach, probably, half way and then next week, we can continue on the rest of it. I'm trying to help them read at their own level so that they can move up because there are some of them that are not at the grade-three level; a lot of them are still at grade one, grade two and*

> *probably one/two are still at kindergarten level. So, I have to move according to that.*

Ms. Joseph went on to say:

> *I'm not a special education teacher so I cannot really diagnose the problem. But, then one of the problems I think is that some of these children don't get…the help that they really, really need at home for one thing. When they go home, there's nobody there to help them for them to get any reinforcements from the work that they have done during the day. Another problem is that maybe when they were in kindergarten, what they were supposed to learn there, probably, they didn't absorb it too well, so by the time they moved on to grade two the…level of work was probably too hard for them; and you know that can confuse the children if they're not at the level that they're supposed to be when they're in the classroom. And by the time they move on to grade 1, from kindergarten, and then to grade 2 and then grade 3, some of them get totally lost as to what you're doing because the level of the work you're doing is not the level they are at, and that can keep them behind a lot.*

From Ms. Joseph's conversation, there were two points that were noteworthy. The first was regarding the lack of help provided at home. This supported what I had known about the home-school connections. That is, "if we do not attend to the home when we discuss literacy development, whatever strategies we carry out in school will never be completely successful" (Morrow & Paratore, 1993, p. 194). I, therefore, inquired into the connections that had probably been made between the school and the students' homes/families. Ms. Joseph's response was, "They [parents]…I would say most of them…they don't respond; they don't come to the school when we call them; [chuckles] they don't help the children at home…most of them, they cannot help their children." Ms. Joseph went on to explain, "I…mean that the parents…most of the parents are not able to read and write and, not only that…some of them work; as I said, there's nobody there at home to help them. So, it makes it difficult…." As a St. Lucian, I understood the position Ms. Joseph took for establishing that connection between the students' homes and their learning performances. I was aware of the fact that many young parents in St. Lucia are illiterate. For example, when I spoke with James's mother, a young-looking lady, at the threshold of my research, she sadly expressed that she could not read. In her words: "I cannot read [and touched her head]." In terms of the importance of parents' contributions, and the types of contributions Ms. Joseph thought parents could make to help improve students' language arts abilities, Ms. Joseph declared:

> [*Chuckles] I think that the parents are very important in helping the children work because…I mean…they spend a lot of their time with them, and they need to be involved; they need to be able to help them. The parents that show that they don't really care, most times, their children are the ones who just give up; they are demotivated to do anything because there's nobody to check what they do; there's nobody to check their books when they get home; there's nobody to see that they do their homework—so they just don't do anything. Many of the parents are not proficient users of the English language. If they speak properly at their home, the children are going to model from them and speak properly—*

12

> *because I have my daughter there…and I mean…she speaks well; people are amazed; when people meet her, they are amazed to hear her talk [I butted in and said, laughingly, "Of course, her Mom is a teacher."] [Ms. Joseph laughs and continues]. I mean…from the time they are small you help them speak properly; you correct them. When they say something wrong—you see to it that they structure sentences properly. So I think if the parents do that at home, the children are going to speak properly…because I mean they spend so much time at home with their parents so the way that they hear people around them speak, that's how they speak [chuckles]. And another thing, most times I give them homework and sometimes they come with it undone—yeah—the children who do the homework, you can see that they show an improvement. If the parents would help the children at home more, I think that would be a good thing; that would help them a bit.*

The second point that was noteworthy from the previous conversation was Ms. Joseph's awareness that the children's learning difficulties have existed since kindergarten. Ms. Joseph's line of thinking resonates with research studies such as Juel's (1988) longitudinal study of 54 children who were tracked from first through fourth grades. The study revealed that "the probability that a child would remain a poor reader at the end of fourth grade, if the child was a poor reader at the end of first grade was .88" (p. 440). In other words, there is little chance that the reading ability of a poor first-grade reader will improve by the end of fourth grade. However, "later intervention remains a viable solution for [those] students who were not given adequate help during the early grades" (Strickland, 2000, p. 100).

I asked Ms. Joseph about early intervention programs, particularly with respect to a special education specialist whose role is to support the students' learning. Ms. Joseph furnished me with this information:

> *Yes, at the moment we have a special education teacher who sometimes…during the day, she takes them out and she does some work with them individually or maybe in small groups. And at the moment, she is diagnosing them so that she can tell me what level that they are at in a particular subject area—ok, I think she has done the mathematics so far. She's not totally complete, but then she still has to do the language aspect of it which she has not done. She's in the process of doing that.*

Ms. Joseph informed me further that the special education teacher was a full-time staff member who only dealt with the extremely weak children in the school. However, these children were not given help on a regular basis. Ms. Joseph explains, "She takes them out—not every week because she has so many children to attend to so…sometimes, she'll come for them once/twice for the week, ok?...to give them special attention." Unfortunately, Peter, James, and John were among those who had not yet received supplemental help in reading. It should be noted that these three students had been assigned to the special education teacher in their previous grade (second grade).

The year before (2004), Ms. Joseph had also taught a third-grade class and so she made a comparison between the performance of her former and her current class of third graders:

> *The grade 3 that I had last year was a very, very weak class. Most of the children were not at the grade-3 level; maybe just about a handful of them. I had a couple of children who were at preschool level; I had some who were at kindergarten level; others at grade 1 and others at grade 2, and probably just a handful at the grade 3 level. But this year, the children are basically new and then the special education teacher is just in the process of diagnosing the level that they are at, so I'm still waiting for her to give me the results so that I could really know how many that I have at the various levels. But generally speaking, they are much better than those I had last year; although I will say that the majority of them are still not at the grade 3 level based on the reading material that I give some of them; but they are a little better than those I had last year.*

Having taught third grade for two consecutive school years, I wanted to know if Ms. Joseph found teaching third grade preferable to other grades in the school. She explained,

> *Well, I taught kindergarten for about 3 years and I preferred teaching the kindergarten kids, although they keep you on your feet and they drive you crazy most of the time [chuckles], but then I'd rather have a set of children that are just coming in new—so I know that I have to begin at a particular place with them. So, I can see how they are moving and the progress that they are making. But then the classroom that I have now…I have children that are at all different levels and then this can be very, very*

> *difficult. So I have to cater for all those individuals that are in the classroom.*

The moment came when I had to put aside my telescopic stance (one that allowed me to view Peter, James, and John at a distance so I could see a larger picture of them in relation to their peers in their language arts classroom learning environment). I wanted a closer look at the picture Ms. Joseph had presented me. So, I narrowed my focus a bit, and inquired specifically about Peter, James, and John's performance in class, their interactions with their peers and teacher, and their home backgrounds. Ms. Joseph had very little to say about James' performance and his interactions, and had not obtained information on his home background. She said,

> *James hardly talks; he's faster…a bit better than…Peter and John in the reading—he's not at the grade 3 level. James does not talk much…but he's a…I think he's shy. He interacts with the students who sit next to him, ok? and he does not come to me like…some of the other children; he just likes to smile…at me; at anything.*

Ms. Joseph presented Peter's profile this way:

> *[Peter] is a very slow child. I don't think he's at the grade 3 level yet. Ok, I think he's probably not at the grade 1 level because there are a lot of basic sight words that the grade 1 children are supposed to know and he still doesn't know…some of them.*

Ms. Joseph proceeded, "[Peter], [Peter] is different [chuckles]. He talks a lot…almost everyone in the class is his friend; he always has something to say; but… sometimes, not often—he can get into trouble. Oh, and he likes to help." She continued:

> *In terms of his home background, I don't know much about [Peter's] home background. I'm still waiting. We have to call a meeting so that I can meet the children's parents, which I have not done, so I don't know much about his home background.*

With respect to John's performance and his interactions in class, Ms. Joseph had very little to say as well, and had not obtained information on his home background either. She declared, "I don't know what to say about [John]. He's not settled—not settled at all; he's very, very, very slow. He's all over…all over the place—laughing, doing all sorts of things [laughs]. He really, really needs to settle."

Strickland (2000) says "Regardless of the help children receive through special programs, ongoing attention to these learners in the regular classroom remains key to any attempt at early intervention" (p. 100). This is critical in understanding the responsibility of the classroom teacher in providing learning experiences for less able students. I asked Ms. Joseph to articulate the instructional approaches she utilized when teaching the three students who, according to her, were struggling readers and writers to speak, read, and write St. Lucian Standard English. In her words:

> *Ok, some of the approaches that I use when I'm teaching the language arts—sometimes I do oral speaking, that's listening and speaking. They talk a lot, I ask them to talk about a subject, a particular subject or a story that we are doing for the week. They talk about it and give their own views about it, they explain what they understand from the story that has been read to them, talk about their own experiences, and that's for oral. Sometimes I use the question and answer relationship approach, whereby*

> *you question them and you have them to see the relationship between questions and answers—help them to find answers in a given passage; teach them how to answer questions orally. I ask them a lot of questions, I question them, they answer questions, I try to make them answer questions in complete sentences, and try to give them a lot of practice in that. I try to see that they can read and understand what they have read. I make them read and after they have read, I question them about it to make sure they can understand what they have read, and then in terms of the writing, right now I'm making them write sentences, we are not really doing stories yet; I'm trying to see that they can understand how to write a proper sentence—subject and verb agreement; that the sentences make sense, and then after that we going to begin with the story writing.*

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of instruction being at an appropriate level for students. Burns et al. (1999) talk about the readability of textbooks as an important variable that teachers need to consider in literacy instruction. Undoubtedly, it is important that teachers consider the suitability of a textbook before assigning it to a student. When a student is assigned a textbook that is very difficult for her/him to read, it will immediately be frustrating and the student will be unable to comprehend it. I therefore asked Ms. Joseph about the suitability of the students' new grade-three reading book/basal reader, *Reading and Writing Everyday*. I wanted to ascertain whether the students could cope with their third-grade reading book. Ms. Joseph informed me that the textbook was too difficult for the vast majority of the students in the class, including Peter, James, and John, to read. Strickland (2000) warns that "guided reading instruction should make use of texts that are suited to students' ability levels and gradually increase in difficulty" (p. 104).

Ms. Joseph went on to describe the method she used to help the class read the reading passages (other than those from the textbook which the Ministry of Education prescribed for them) that she prepared for them:

> *Well, when I give them a passage, sometimes I put a lot of new words in it—words that I know that they don't know. Sometimes, I read it to them. If I know that they cannot read it, I'll read it to them and then...when they get to the word that they don't know, I'll ask them to explain the meaning; whether they can understand the meaning, the word in the context, whether they can explain the meaning that they think...the word has, and then after that, if they cannot tell me, I'll probably use the word in other examples so they are able to understand what I mean; and if they really, really don't know I will tell them. I'll use the word in other sentences for them and then we will read. Next, we read the sentences with the word; then I make them use it in their own sentences to make sure that they really understand the word and then, we read sentences using that particular word.*

Figure 4.5 shows Ms. Joseph employing the direct instructional strategy in her classroom.

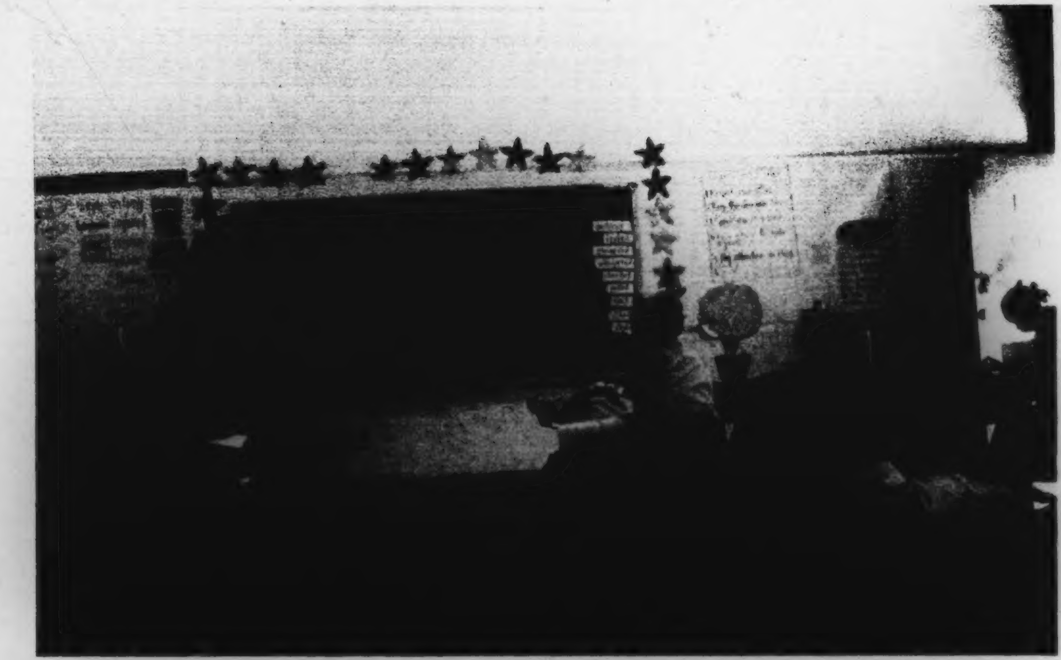


Figure 4.5. Ms. Joseph provides direct or explicit language arts instruction

Instructional materials/resources are essential in language arts instruction. They can enhance the teaching-learning situation a great deal. In this context, I inquired about the materials Ms. Joseph utilized to teach language arts. Ms. Joseph replied,

> *I don't really use anything most of the time when we do oral language. I question them most of the time; it's a lot of talking, I ask them questions, they answer me and, I try and guide them so that they are going to answer in proper sentences.*

At another time, Ms. Joseph remarked, "Well, it's important that we use various resources—probably a tape recorder and things like that. I didn't use any of these things…Mostly I question them, make them answer questions, help them question each other, and answer questions."

In terms of lesson planning, Pratt (1990) asserts,

> However detailed a curriculum may be, at some point it must be translated into lessons for actual teachers to instruct actual learners. Although some curricula contain lesson outlines, the activity of planning lessons is difficult to do in the abstract. It is not until we encounter our students in person that we can determine the day-to-day content and teaching strategies that are most appropriate for them. (p. 127)

What Pratt is saying here is that lesson planning must meet the needs of the students. Therefore, it was necessary for me to gain insight into Ms. Joseph's lesson planning activities. Her lessons illuminated the types of language and literacy opportunities she provided for the students:

> *[Hesitates] What I do here is that I take a passage, a story, I make sure that the story has the concepts that I want the children to learn; I make sure it has the words that I want them to learn for the vocabulary; I make sure it has the particular letters that I want them to learn; the sounds of the letters that I want them to learn for reading skills. I make sure that it has the mechanics, if I am doing full stop, capital letter, or comma. Whatever punctuation mark that I am doing for the week I make sure the passage has those particular punctuation marks in it. I make sure that it has the particular verb that I want to teach—whether I want to do regular/irregular verbs. Also for present tense/past tense, I make sure that the passage has those—the words that I want to teach the children for the week. So probably in a lesson, I will do vocabulary using that same*

> *passage. I will use that passage to help the children understand the words, the meaning of the words and then, I can also use those same words to make them use in their oral language, they'll use them in their own sentences. I use those same words in their writing for them to write up their own sentences. And then maybe the following day, if I'm doing reading skills, I will pick out words with the particular letters that I want them to use. They'll make the sounds of those letters, they'll come up with their own words. If you doing the vowel digraph 'ai' some of the words in the passage will have the 'ai', and then they will read those same words, get the sounds from those words, come up with their own words, use those same words in their own sentences for oral, and write sentences with those same words in their writing. And then if I'm doing grammar that week, I will pick up some of the same sentences with the verbs—I'll use the verbs from the passage and they will see how those verbs are used in the passage, and thereby make up their own sentences in their own writing. The comprehension aspect of it: I'm going to use whatever aspect of comprehension that I am doing. If I am doing main idea or predicting, I can use that same passage and make up my questions from it for them to answer.*

Those reading passages which Ms. Joseph used during her lessons were not intended to emphasize meaning making with the students, per se. They were used primarily for "skill and drill" purposes. It was important also to know the challenges Ms.

Joseph faced in planning and executing her language and literacy lessons, and how she dealt with those challenges.

> *Well, some of the challenges I face, for example…it's very, very difficult to get materials that you can use to cover all the various aspects that you need. So you have to make up your own stories—that can be very difficult and it takes a lot of time because you probably won't be able to get a story that you want—the comprehension aspect that you want to do, the mechanics that you want to do, the reading skills or the vocabulary that you want to do; so you have to make up your own story; that's one. And then another challenge is that I have to make sure that I put it at the level of the children. I don't want to put it very, very low because I know that there are children who will be able to handle it. I don't want to keep them back and then, for the slow ones, I know that they won't be able to know everything; they won't be able to read the whole passage. So I'm hoping that at least they'll be able to read one paragraph out of it for the week, or if it's two lines they can read, or they can learn two words for that week, that's fine because I know they won't be able to learn everything in the passage. If at the end of the week they know at least two, three, or four words, that's good enough for me. So that's another challenge that I have.*

What I gathered from Ms. Joseph's conversation above was that she lacked reading materials (narrative) through which she could teach the students various reading skills such as vocabulary, mechanics, and comprehension. As a result, Ms. Joseph spent large amounts of time composing her own reading selections in order to teach reading skills. She was teaching reading skills directly, but within the context of narrative or literary materials, and not in isolation. This strategy was advocated by the CETT program which Ms. Joseph espoused as the theory behind her philosophical approach to the teaching of language arts. To reiterate Ms. Joseph's words "We don't really use…one theoretical approach. Probably, we use a mixture of various approaches…we are supposed to start with a passage—a story, a big book…In that passage we do our vocabulary, we do our grammar…." The teaching strategy Ms. Joseph employed to teach reading was apt in the sense that Clay (1993) recognizes that direct instruction of skills, (phonics), can occur within the context of authentic reading and writing. This strategy can contribute to the authenticity of the classroom instruction.

The other problem Ms. Joseph cited was one that stemmed from the idea of differentiated instruction/mixed ability grouping. Generally, Ms. Joseph taught a class of 'slow' children (this is a term commonly used in St. Lucia to refer to students with special learning needs), yet the class was diverse in terms of their learning ability—relatively speaking, some students were slower or faster than others. Consequently, Ms. Joseph was faced with the difficult task of catering to the needs of those various ability groupings. Additionally, Ms. Joseph informed me that another challenge she faced in the classroom had to do with the students' behaviour. She explained, "Well, these children…to me keeping them focused is very difficult because…a lot of them are ill-disciplined, and you have to try to keep them there, and they get distracted very, very easily."

The area of assessment is very broad. Therefore, it was beyond the scope of this study to focus in-depth on assessment used in this classroom. However, Ms. Joseph provided me with some data that assisted in my understanding of the language arts learning opportunities that she provided for the three students. Teaching and assessment, unquestionably, go hand in hand (Flippo, 2003). Burns et al. (1999) shed light on the purpose of assessment. They articulate, "Its primary intent is to evaluate student performance in order to provide accountability, classify and place students, or—most importantly—guide instruction" (p. 487). On this basis, I invited Ms. Joseph to reflect on the ways she assessed the students. She posited:

> *Speaking of the assessment portion of it, in my class, I develop my own assessment. I prepare my own tests based on the curriculum that I have, for the first term, the second term, and the third term. And then the other classes who are having their own exams, they usually give them island-wide assessment for the particular curriculum that they have, for example, we have a Minimum Standards at the grade 2 level—those children get an island-wide assessment; grade 4 level also and then we have the Common Entrance examination in grade 6. We don't have any national-wide assessment given to us in my grade; we have to prepare our own assessing materials.*

Ms. Joseph's comments are indicative of the traditional/conventional forms of assessment (standardized tests). Wiggins (1993) posits that proponents of conventional assessments are accused of failing to measure what really counts as useful information that would inform instruction, especially in an era in which problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration are viewed as very important attributes in the schools, the workplace, and in society at large. In terms of alternative assessments Pearson (1998) writes, "The essence of performance assessment, and the central feature that most clearly distinguishes it from conventional assessment, is its emphasis on engaging students in the cognitive process about which the examiner wishes to draw inferences" (p. 268).

In regard to the standardized examinations that Ms. Joseph mentioned—Minimum Standards and Common Entrance—I was curious to know how Ms. Joseph's school performed. Ms. Joseph talked about her school's performance at the grade 4 Minimum Standards examinations. "Well, the students have been doing reasonably well in the grade 4, I'll say average but not very, very bad—average," was Ms. Joseph's response. In particular, I wanted to know about the students' performance in language arts. Therefore, Ms. Joseph went on and said,

> *The language aspect of it—most of the time that's the problem area; language arts and mathematics. Most times, they do better in the other subject areas—the science, the social studies—they do much better in these areas, but they don't do too badly in the language and maths.*

I probed Ms. Joseph further to give her views as to why the students performed the poorest in language arts in relation to the other content areas. She said, "I think that the problem is the reading aspect of it because a lot of them have a lot of problems and difficulty in reading." It was important to know, then, what the language arts component of the examination was really assessing. This was Ms. Joseph's reply:

> *The language aspect of the exam is divided into a lot of components, for example, there's a vocabulary aspect, there's a writing aspect which entails a composition, and there's a comprehension aspect which entails a passage whereby the students have to answer questions based on what*

> *they have read. So, what they do is that they grade each aspect of it…of the language exam, the grammar, the vocabulary, the writing, and the reading aspect, and then they give the students an entire mark for language arts. The language aspect of it is the one that they are weakest at.*

Then, I focused my attention on Ms. Joseph's current third-grade students, including Peter, James, and John, who had written the grade 2 Minimum Standards examinations just the year before they were promoted to their current third-grade class. It was important to know what their performances were generally like on those examinations, from Ms. Joseph's perspective. Ms. Joseph revealed the following:

> *They did the Minimum Standards in grade 2 last year before they moved up into my class…and then I haven't really gotten a chance to go over the examination scripts but then, because this class is the very weak grade 3 class, they didn't do as well as the other grade 3 students. The children that I have, they didn't do as well as they should have done. The thing is, we usually focus on the reading, the language arts, and the mathematics because the language aspects of it moves on to all other subject areas because if they cannot read, they wouldn't be able to read and understand what they have to do, and they need to be able to read to do their science, their social studies, and health also. So, they didn't do very well in the reading.*

I was able to obtain only Peter's Minimum Standards examination report. I analyzed it and found, as already revealed in the previous chapter, that Peter performed very poorly in language arts. He attained only 6% as his overall score in language arts.

Ms. Joseph believed that the ability to read is the foundation for future learning. As a consequence, it is an area of learning that cannot be overlooked or overemphasized. Two major reading areas, in terms of skill building, that teaching and assessment need to focus on are word identification/recognition and comprehension. Students' reading strengths and weaknesses usually lie within these major areas. In this respect, I asked Ms. Joseph to give me a diagnostic picture of the students' reading abilities (including the three students' reading abilities). She remarked,

> *Well, I would say, from my class, the problem is really a lot of word identification problem because if they identify the word, at least they will be able to read it and then these days, I'm trying to help them understand the meaning of words in context—the other words that are around a particular word when they encounter a new word. If they can read the word, reading the word and reading the sentence with the word, they should be able to understand whatever it is that the sentence is telling them.*

Ms. Joseph articulated her personal views on testing:

> *Testing is very good. It helps you to identify children who are not performing at a level that they are supposed to; it helps you to identify their weak areas. Testing is good because I mean, it's not making sense to teach, teach and then you are not testing the children; you have to test*

> *them to find out whether they are grasping whatever it is that they are doing.*

On the other side of the coin, Ms. Joseph could not see any disadvantages of formal testing. According to Ms. Joseph, "No, I can't think of any disadvantages of testing."

The school contained a resource room/library, a key means to extending reading skills. I had made some observations about the organization of the library and the services it offered the students, so, I questioned Ms. Joseph on these issues. She explained:

> *We try to organize it sometimes but when the kids come in...you know? When they pick things, they put them...they just drop them anywhere and sometimes, we have to get some of the teachers to come in and pack the place up, to put it in order...to put things back in order. We have a few resources here...I mean, it's not as many as we would like to have, but we have quite a few story books that they can use for the various grades at the various levels, and we also have instruments that they can use in their science. We have some charts that we can also use in our class, but not as many as we would like to have.*

I probed Ms. Joseph in order to get a more holistic picture of the library. She declared, "We don't have a librarian. We use students from the grade 6 sometimes…we have an hour during lunch, they come in…when the children come in to sign out books, they help them in that regard." Ms. Joseph proceeded to provide me with further details regarding the procedure used for accessing the library and for borrowing books:

> *We don't have all of them [students] come in at the same time. There is a day specified for each class—either Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. They come in during lunch time to borrow books and the books are marked. There's a section for infants, a section for juniors, and a section for the grade 6 children. Sometimes when the older students are there, they should be able to help the children select a book that is going to help them.*

From a more personal standpoint, I invited Ms. Joseph to reflect on what she knew and believed about herself as a language arts teacher. I wanted to know if she saw herself as a *reflective practitioner*. Many teachers are reflective practitioners who continually evaluate or give thoughtful considerations of the effects of their teaching on student learning, in order to hone their knowledge and skills, and to develop more positive dispositions as teachers (Henniger, 2004). This was Ms. Joseph's personal reflection:

> *Well, one of my strengths I have...I know is that, I like to talk a lot [laughs]. I encourage the kids to talk a lot, and we always talk and talk and talk. Sometimes, we talk so much that we forget the time is going on. One of the things I really want them to do—I really want them to learn much more, much more sight words than they do right now because it creates a barrier in terms of their reading ability. Right now we have just a handful of computers there. So, I can use these so that I can probably prepare more materials, more worksheets to give them—worksheets that would help them to enjoy whatever it is that they are doing.*

It should be stressed that a reflective practitioner explores opportunities to grow professionally. Gunning (2005) explains: "To keep up with the latest developments in the fields of reading and writing instruction, it is necessary to be professionally active—to join professional organizations, attend meetings, take part in staff-development activities, and read in the field" (p. 574). I, therefore, inquired about the ways Ms. Joseph fostered her professional development in the teaching and learning of language arts. She stated:

> *Well, sometimes we have what you call professional development day. Sometimes, I get ideas from the other grade-three teacher. She helps me out in certain things, probably tells me how to go about teaching a certain topic since she's more experienced than I am.*

Ms. Joseph did not mention any professional reading she engaged in or any other forms of professional development.

Ms. Joseph's Final Reflections

At the end of my data collection, which was at the end of the school term (December, 2005), I interviewed Ms. Joseph again so she could reflect on the language and literacy teaching approaches she employed during the term and, also, to gain her opinion on Peter, James, and John's performances in Language arts. Here are Ms. Joseph's final reflections:

> *Well, I wish I had more worksheets to give them—more activities to give them...to give them more practice. [Chuckles] I think I made some head-way with this group of children during this term. Looking at the reports from the past class, I think some of them have made a great deal of*

> *improvement; some of them are still really slow in the reading because…I mean in one term, I can't make a miracle [chuckles]. A few of them have changed a great deal. [Peter] has shown a bit of improvement, and he's a bit more motivated, and [James] is coming along. I can't say much about [John], he's still not settled and he'll do things...*

I present three anecdotal records from my field notes in order to substantiate Ms. Joseph's remarks on John's behaviour during language and literacy instruction:

# 1: The children are now reading orally but John is sitting in his chair and he's bent forward with his left cheek flat on the desk. He has a graph sheet under a plane sheet of paper and is attempting to trace the squares.

# 2: Class gets into groups of six to write a sentence using the word 'sway'. John is in a group but, this time, he's colouring the graph sheet. He now leaves the group and gets in trouble with a girl sitting alone at the front of the class and colouring. The trouble starts as he grabs the girl's pencil case, but it ends immediately; he's given it back to her. He joins his group again and is playing with something.

# 3: John is crawling on the floor between the desks and is giggling while the teacher is calling on the various groups to read their sentences. Another troublesome boy has joined him. They are both crawling and giggling, as if they are trying to hide away from Ms. Joseph. The strange thing is that it does not seem Ms. Joseph will stop her lesson to admonish these boys as she would normally do in Patois/Creole French, so it appears

that Ms. Joseph has not noticed them. But I think she has; I think she has just turned a blind eye to them this time.

When I invited Ms. Joseph to talk, in particular, about how she would handle John's disruptive behaviour in class the following term, she remarked:

> *Well, I have to call in his parent to have a talk with her. That is one thing I intended to do...at the beginning...at the beginning of the school year, and I have to probably give him some extra attention, keep him back sometimes so that he can do some extra work—I intend to do that.*

Researcher's Observations of Ms. Joseph's Language and Literacy Instruction

Sample Lessons and Field Notes: Ms. Joseph's Language and Literacy Instruction

As the starting point, I present information about teaching practices that are typical of the language and literacy lessons in this grade-three classroom. Sample lessons and a copy of the original field notes are in Appendix C.

What was typical about Ms. Joseph's language arts teaching approaches? When the students came in from recess, immediately, Ms. Joseph would ask them to quickly take their seats to get ready for the lesson. Ms. Joseph then would write 'Language Arts' and the topic on the blackboard then ensure that students were ready for the lesson before she began to teach. She informed them about what they would be learning, that is, if she used a new story, she would begin by telling them that she would read them a story, she would tell them the title of the story, for example, *The Fight*, and give them some idea of what they would be doing. Next, Ms. Joseph would read the story while the students were listening. With her good knowledge of the subject matter and high level of confidence, Ms. Joseph would then proceed to teach the intended skill such as identifying short and long sounds. During that time, she would ensure that the students got lots of practice mainly through a question-answer mode and/or sentence-by-sentence reading. (Some students would participate while others would not.) Then, she would conclude her lesson by telling the students that they would be doing some seatwork, for example, an exercise from their workbook. During that time, Ms. Joseph would walk around assisting some of the students (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Ms. Joseph giving individual attention to a student (John)

The students usually worked individually. When Ms. Joseph realized that it was time to stop writing, she would ask the students to stop and pay attention so she could correct the exercise with the whole class. She would then proceed, questioning the students to determine the right answer. (Some students would participate while others would not.) The exercise would most times be completed by the end of the lesson period—the lesson would end on time for lunch—noon.

In addition, Ms. Joseph placed heavy emphasis on teaching carefully sequenced sets of skills during the lessons, insofar that the same reading passage which she used on Monday, for example, was used at least three times during the week but for a different purpose each day: to help students develop various language and literacy skills, mostly vocabulary, phonics, and grammar. When a passage was used by the second day, Ms. Joseph's teaching style would change slightly at the beginning of the lesson and would usually follow this pattern: Ms. Joseph would ask the class to get the handout that they used the day before or turn their books to a page number, and then the lesson would proceed in its usual manner from that point. So, in such a case, Ms. Joseph would not read a story to the class. What was remarkable, however, was that those skills were taught within the context of a story that the teacher had read to the class. The students usually read sentence-by-sentence. After each sentence which the students read, Ms. Joseph intervened and asked questions or conducted some other form of activity with the students, for example, vocabulary building. At the end of the lessons, the students were always given exercises to do in their workbooks, on worksheets, exercise/note books, or from the blackboard, which provided practice in or reinforcement of those various language arts skills. Ms. Joseph ensured that seatwork was checked to determine accuracy of students' language arts skills.

In terms of writing as a language arts strand, it was done only at the end of a lesson (grammar, vocabulary, phonics). The students' writing was always done in the form of a workbook, worksheet, notebook, or blackboard exercise. The students worked in groups. However, most times, they were asked to do their writing exercises individually. The following is an example of the type of writing that the students did at the end of a lesson. At the end of a grammar lesson, the teacher wrote this exercise on the blackboard and asked the students to do the exercise in their notebooks. (Samples of the three students' writing are found in Appendix D.)

Put was or were to complete each sentence.

1. Charlie________ afraid of the whales.

2. The girls________ having a picnic.

3. The trees________ swaying in the breeze.

One of Ms. Joseph's teaching strategies consisted of providing story experience through which she taught those language and literacy skills to the students. It is quite commonplace in St. Lucian primary schools for teachers to teach those language arts skills in isolation and not within the context of whole text. Although the students in Ms. Joseph's class read in a sentence-by-sentence style which, I could see, affected the students' ability to construct meaning from the text (many of the students could not correctly answer literal questions from the text or even retell a story in a meaningful manner), nevertheless, it was an uncovering for me and, more importantly, it had the potential to captivate the students—as it did—at the beginning of those lessons. Also, the students were able to relate to the words and sentences, that were extracted from the story for the learning of those skills, in a broader context; that of a narrative. It was evident that Ms. Joseph applied her language and literacy philosophy which, as she indicated earlier, stemmed from the CETT program, to her language arts instruction.

What was not typical about Ms. Joseph's pedagogical approach? Tuesday, November 22, 2005 was St. Cecilia's Day. Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians. The school celebrated this religious festival on that day. When the students came in from recess and were settled, Ms. Joseph briefly did a blackboard exercise which required the students to say orally the word, chosen from the four options, that was opposite in meaning to the underlined word in each of the four sentences that she quickly wrote on the blackboard, for example, "The beautiful girl was singing on the stage" (pretty, ugly, lovely, nice).

As soon as they were finished doing the exercise, Ms. Joseph asked the class to get their notebooks with the song that they had been rehearsing a day or two ago after school, to participate in their school concert which was to take place in the afternoon. The song title was *That's The Way It Is* by the Canadian singing superstar, Celine Dion. What was so different about this lesson was that I observed the majority of the children, including Peter, running with such zest to get their books for a class activity—to rehearse that particular song for their school concert. Not only were the students excited, but also their teacher. At that time, this was a popular song in St. Lucia and even little children enjoyed singing and listening to it. That was a remarkable day.

Unfortunately, James did not embrace that exciting moment; he told me that he did not like to sing, and made no effort to join the singing group at the front of the class.

John did not join the group either. He seemed to prefer playing with his friend (as usual). John and his friend, along with James and two other children were absent from the singing group. This convinced me even more that there is, indeed, a need for differentiated instruction because classrooms are diverse in terms of skills, abilities, interests, and aptitudes (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1998). This activity could have been an opportunity for social interaction and collaboration in a very meaningful way among the students and between the students and their teacher. It provided a complete break from Ms. Joseph's usual form of classroom interaction—walking around the classroom and patiently helping individual students (and sometimes groups) with their workbook activities to promote their mastery of language and literacy skills.

Researcher's Perspectives on Ms. Joseph's Oral Language Instruction

There are many theories about learning which direct teachers' language and literacy instruction. One of the learning theories that I highlight in this section is *Behaviourism*. In this light, Doll (1996) states: "Advocates of this theory speak often of repetition, reinforcement, and shaping. They tend to say to learners, 'We want you to have success; you can have it by our structured methods'" (p. 76). Those structured methods include direct instruction of skills—skills taught directly in a planned and sequential order. Students are required to practice those skills they learned by completing fill-in-the-blank worksheets. Further, another term congruent with behaviourism is 'transmission.' Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2001) explain that in theories of transmission, the child is seen as a passive and empty vessel that should be filled with knowledge. This theoretical background resonates with Ms. Joseph's approach to the teaching of language and literacy.

With respect to oral language learning and teaching, Peter, James, and John were provided with opportunities for talk mainly during direct instruction of language arts skills such as reading comprehension, phonics, grammar, and vocabulary. I found that Ms. Joseph seemed to have equated the students' learning and the teaching of oral language with the students' ability to correctly answer questions orally and in complete sentences. For example, during every language arts lesson, Ms Joseph asked the class lots of questions to give them practice in using St. Lucian Standard English and to determine whether they grasped the concept she taught or comprehended the ideas she expected them to comprehend from a given reading passage. Ms. Joseph said, "We ask them a lot of questions, we question them, they answer questions, try to make them answer questions in complete sentences, try to give them a lot of practice in that." While this is a technique that can be used to give students opportunities to listen to the manner in which questions can be asked in St. Lucian Standard English, and to practice in responding in the expected language, and while, at the same time, it can be used as an informal assessment strategy, such a teaching technique had its limitations.

In among a class of thirty students, the three identified students' opportunities for talk or their purposes/functions for language use within the context of direct instruction were very limited. They had, for example, to wait their turn to be called upon by their teacher to answer the questions she posed to the class. Sometimes, time did not permit them to be called upon, especially James and John who hardly ever raised their hands to participate in the question-answer activities. Apart from that, the questions Ms. Joseph asked the students required brief answers (usually a sentence or word), which did not allow for oral/self-expression in a holistic manner that, if given, would have enabled the students to use their knowledge (linguistic competence) in authentic speech for real purposes and audiences (linguistic performance) to improve their oral communication skills and strategies. Here is an extract from my journal that illustrates this finding:

> *In a grammar lesson which focused on number (singular and plural: is, are), the teacher wrote some sentences on the blackboard and asked the class whether they could change each sentence to indicate either one (singular) or more than one (plural). James and John did not raise their hands to make a contribution. However, Peter raised his hand and the teacher called upon him at some point to orally change the sentence, 'The cat is playing with a ball', from its singular form to its plural form. Peter confidently said, "The cat- are playing with a ball." Then the teacher wrote Peter's exact construction on the board (as she said she would) and asked the rest of the class, "What's wrong with this sentence?" A student replied, "Cat." Teacher asked further, "What about cat?" The same student uttered, "It's missing [s]." The teacher went up to Peter and told him that his sentence was missing an s.*

The literature on culturally diverse classroom instruction is persistent in discouraging constant or inappropriate correction of non-standard English in students' speech. Constant correction of children's native speech has commonly been used as a language improvement strategy by many language teachers (Roberts, 1988). Roberts warns of the dangers involved in the use of this strategy. For example, when children's natural speech is constantly corrected from the start they can adopt defensive and negative tactics to escape their teacher's criticism. Delpit (2002), also, cautions teachers in this regard: "Forcing speakers to monitor their language typically produces silence" (p.

125). Furthermore, my experiences as a St. Lucian primary school student and as a primary school teacher had taught me that when St. Lucian Creole-speaking children, be it Creole French or Creole English, entered primary schools, they were faced with the challenge of learning St. Lucian school English or English as spoken by the mainstream culture.

The challenge of learning St. Lucian Standard English surfaces in classrooms when children are asked by their teachers to leave their "bad language/English" far from the classroom door and enter into the mainstream language culture to try their very best to speak St. Lucian Standard English at all times, in the classroom and on the playground. As a consequence, I focused my attention for such instances in Ms. Joseph's teaching-learning environment. I was surprised that Ms. Joseph had, in fact, allowed the students to utter expressions reflecting their native language in the classroom. Peter in particular, the outspoken one, uttered some exaggerated basilectal-Creole-English expressions sometimes—especially when someone got him angry in the classroom, for example, "Behave kou gason!" ("Behave yourself boy!"). Also, once, Peter was in a group of four doing their usual seatwork after a lesson. They were to use the words they had learned during the lesson in sentences of their own, as directed by their teacher. The group was experiencing difficulty with the word 'remember.' They called on Ms. Joseph for assistance. She immediately went to their group. First, Ms. Joseph helped them to identify the word phonetically. Then, she asked, "What does the word 'remember' mean in Patois?" Peter shouted, "Shoja." Ms. Joseph then said, "Yes, shoja, it means remember." These instances are indicative of what Ms. Joseph meant when she said earlier on, "There's no program, we [teachers] just allow them [Creole-English learners] to talk whenever they choose to."

However, the data revealed instances, more often than not, whereby Ms. Joseph corrected, interrupted, and did not accept the students' native speech during her actual teaching. For example, during a reading vocabulary lesson, the students were studying the word 'humiliated,' taken out of their basal reader. Ms. Joseph asked the class to find another word that meant the same as humiliated. A student said, "Embarrass." The teacher wrote the word on the blackboard then asked for another word. A student shouted out the Patois translation for the word 'embarrass' ("a- bar-wah-sé!"). Rather than explaining to the student that his word meant the same as the English word, Ms. Joseph did not acknowledge the student's answer and immediately said, "We want an English word." Some other students, including Peter, insisted on saying the Patois word but Ms. Joseph ignored them and their enthusiasm to make a contribution and, instead, went on with her lesson.

It was when Ms. Joseph was actually teaching that she became overly concerned about the type of language the students used in the classroom—not during seatwork or any other time say, recess. There are several factors cited in my literature review that can shed light on this language situation in Ms. Joseph's classroom. For example, Craig (1983) is of the opinion that social and attitudinal factors are the main causes of the serious problems that exist in the language education of non-standard English speakers. He argues that it is unreasonable for teachers or school authorities to expect that non-standard-speaking children, particularly at the primary level and to a lesser extent at the secondary level, will perceive relevance in the learning of Standard English. What is absolutely necessary is interest on the part of the children. It is better for students if interest originates spontaneously while engaging in English-language activities, rather than being forced out of social awareness and the recognition that English is necessary for pragmatic purposes.

Researcher's Perspectives on Ms. Joseph's Literacy Instruction

As already indicated, the literacy experiences Ms. Joseph provided for the three focus students were rooted in the transmission theory of learning and teaching (Dahlberg, et al., 2001). Ms. Joseph had, in fact, a class of struggling readers and writers, including Peter, James, and John. What I found was that their reading and writing levels seemed to fall within the kindergarten to grade one range; or, perhaps, grade two for James. They were reading and writing far below the standards set by the national curriculum for third graders, as Ms. Joseph had indicated.

In the area of reading, I observed that the three students had difficulty in both word identification and comprehension, more so in word identification since Ms. Joseph focused more on the word identification reading component. This finding is congruent with Ms. Joseph's observation when she said that "the problem is really…word identification because if they identify the word, at least they will be able to read it and then these days, I'm trying to help them understand the meaning of words in context." The data revealed a number of instances in which the three students, especially Peter and John, were struggling hard to read their basal reader. It was obvious that the boys' reading books were too difficult for them to read, yet this was the prescribed text for all third graders in primary schools throughout the island of St. Lucia, and so Ms. Joseph did not attempt to provide them with more appropriate texts. The three students always had great difficulty decoding and comprehending their third-grade textbook. As a supplement to the students' reading book, Ms. Joseph provided other reading passages for the students to read. Those passages which she selected from sources other than the students' reading book were also very difficult for the students to read, because she selected those materials specifically for the purpose of teaching the language and literacy skills. I draw this conclusion not solely on my observations but, rather, in juxtaposition with Ms. Joseph's previous comment that "it's very, very difficult to get materials that you can use to cover all the various aspects that you need [comprehension, vocabulary, mechanics, and so on]. So, you have to make up your own stories—that can be difficult and it takes a lot of time." It is important to note, however, that Ms. Joseph was aware of the importance of providing reading materials that were suitable for the students' abilities. She demonstrated this when she reflected on the challenges she encountered in planning and executing her lessons:

> *I have to make sure that I put it at the level of the children. I don't want to put it very, very low because I know that there are children who will be able to handle it…and then, for the slow ones, I know that they won't be able to know everything.*

Ms. Joseph was caught in a dilemma. It was her desire to cater to the needs of her heterogeneous class of students, including the three students who could have been put into groups for instruction on occasions. For example, Peter and John and other students with similar abilities could have formed one group, and James and others similar to him could have formed another, to add to the class groupings. The solution to this dilemma was that Ms. Joseph catered to the needs of the more able readers. She also gave priority to the materials she created herself over other language and literacy learning materials, such as story books (of course, those which could match the three students' interests and abilities), expository texts, poetry texts, magazines, maps, objects and artifacts (perhaps from field trips or the students' homes), and the students' own pieces of work that they could have created during writing, for instance. The students' reading book contained expository (explanatory) chapters, for example, *Report on Fishing in the Caribbean (Part 1)*, (Chapter 13), and *The Water We Drink, the Water We 'Eat'* (Chapter 16), but Ms. Joseph's focus was mainly on narrative reading.

The classroom contained some trade books, but, they were not sufficient and varied for the large number of students in the classroom. The students were not encouraged to read those books nor did Ms. Joseph use them to read aloud to the students during language arts instruction. The students, themselves, did not engage in the reading of those books during their lunch or recess break, when they were free from classroom instruction and were more or less on their own in the classroom. It could be that the students (particularly Peter who, for the most part, took risks during reading lessons) shied away from the books because they were too difficult for them to read independently. From another perspective, the students did not appear to be interested in the books, perhaps because the selection was limited.

The school contained a small library/resource room. With respect to the role the school library played in providing support and encouragement for the students' language arts development, this is what Ms. Joseph articulated:

> *The library has some books. We try to tell them [the children] to use the books from the library. Most of them, oh boy, they take the books; some of them don't return the books; some of them destroy the books. We have this mobile library that comes in once a week—it's from the central library, from the Ministry of Education. They come here, they have the books on the bus, and then we ask the parents to come in to sign for their children so that they will be able to borrow books from it. They don't come!*

I invited Ms. Joseph to share her thoughts on the organization of the school library. She replied, "It's not all that organized. But, it has many books; maybe, not enough for every child in the school, but if they would make use of it, I think it would help them." The students were not provided with appropriate, varied, and adequate reading materials to support their learning of language and literacy in their classroom, and the school library appeared to play a minimal role in their language and literacy program. Strickland (2000) emphasizes how much of the students' success in reading and writing hinges on the type of instructional experiences and materials that are provided during instruction:

> Struggling readers and writers need opportunities to work with a wide array of materials. Too often whole-group activities use materials well beyond their reading levels, and their independent work consists of a steady diet of worksheets and workbooks. Like all learners, these readers need materials that give them the confidence to take the necessary risks involved in gradually mastering harder and harder material. Guided

> reading instruction should make use of texts that are suited to students' ability levels and gradually increase in difficulty. (p. 104)

Ms. Joseph corrected the students' speech—particularly Peter's—not only during grammar lessons, but also during reading lessons. On a few occasions during reading comprehension instruction, the students were given the opportunity to retell a story they had listened to. One story was entitled *A Disappointing Day*. Peter, unlike James and John, was not afraid to take risks during reading instruction. So Peter quickly raised his hand to retell the story. He began by saying, "One day, they had go by the beach." The teacher corrected Peter instantly by saying, "They went to the beach." Peter repeated the teacher's construction and paused for a brief moment before he continued, as if he had forgotten what he was going to say. He struggled to recall the story and eventually said: "When they was ready to go, the rain was fallin-." The teacher said to him, "It was raining." At the beginning of his retelling of the story, Peter was enthusiastic but, it was plain to see that he had lost his confidence and his train of thought as he struggled to cope with the teacher's corrections. This was another instance that demonstrated Ms. Joseph's overly "cautious" approach to students using their native language while she was teaching a lesson. The students were not as "free" to use their native language in the classroom as she had projected earlier on.

The Students' Experiences with Language and Literacy Learning

Under this heading, I present the data regarding the students' perspectives on their language and literacy learning experiences in the classroom. Doll (1996) states that "all interaction of the individual with the environment is experience" (p. 227). Additionally, "The term 'learning experience' is not the same as the content with which a course deals nor the activities performed by the teacher. The term 'learning experience' refers to the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which he can react" (Tyler, 1949, p. 63). With this understanding, Peter, James, and John's perspectives on their language and literacy learning experiences in the classroom were viewed in relation to their accounts of their family backgrounds, their language and literacy learning experiences at home, their interests, attitudes, and self-concepts as readers, writers, and speakers of the St. Lucian Standard English language.

Peter

Peter's Language and Literacy Experiences at Home

I asked Peter a series of questions on his perspectives on his language and literacy learning experiences at home. Peter claimed that he had books, apart from his basal reader, at home to read and that he read on his own at home. I asked him what kinds of books he read at home. His reply was, "Reading books." I probed him to say the name/title of one of the books he had read. He thought a minute and then said, "Long ago the Sun and the Wind." This title was the beginning of a short story entitled *The Sun and the Wind* on pages 44-46 in Peter's basal reader. Peter said that he read on his own, voluntarily. In this respect he said, "I jus- take a book." Peter also read to his family, he said, for example, his mother and brothers. I asked him whether he read to his baby sister. He laughed and quickly said, "She ka-a read." (She can't read.) Peter had little or no vocabulary for talking about books. His responses seemed to be those he thought I would want to hear as a person connected with his school. As a result of this exchange, I believe Peter had very little reading material at home and few opportunities to read there. It was essential to know also whether Peter's mother, Jenny, would ask him to read to her and the frequency of that experience. Peter's response was, "She does tell me to come and read to her." When asked how often, he replied, "For a long time." Peter claimed that his mother read to him. This was not consistent with what he said when I first met him, that his mother could not read and write. I did not meet Jenny so, on this basis, I cannot corroborate whether she could read or not. When I reworded the question relating to 'how often he read,' Peter replied, "Once a week." The meaning of the phrase 'how often' had posed some difficulty to Peter. I asked Peter whether he asked his family or a friend to read to him and why/why not. Peter's responses were "yeah;" and "Koz my friend read nice."

I asked Peter to talk about his writing experiences at home. Peter claimed that he wrote at home and the kind of writing that he did, according to him, was "Sentence and words." Peter also said that he liked to write at home. His reason was, "Koz I like to write." Peter's responses demonstrated that he lacked opportunities to engage in genuine and exciting purposes for writing at home. In terms of the home environment influencing Peter's reading and writing, Peter said, "I does see my brother read. I does see my brother write." They too wrote "Sentence and words," according to Peter.

Peter's Language and Literacy Experiences in School

Here, I began by exploring the strategies Peter employed when he encountered a word with which he was unfamiliar. In this context, Peter said, "I pass it." (meaning, I skip it.) I probed him further and he said, "Yeah, when I finish I come back over it. I try to read it piece by piece, or I ax somebody." Peter said that in doing so, he was able to say the word. From my observations of Peter's oral reading in the classroom, Peter used all three strategies. These strategies are recommended in the literature to help readers identify unfamiliar words during reading, for example, Burns et al. (1999) posit:

> When a child encounters an unfamiliar word when reading orally to the teacher, instead of supplying the word, the teacher can encourage the child to skip it for the time being and read on to the end of the sentence (or even to the next sentence) to see what word would make sense. (p. 91)

However, whenever Peter attempted to read the words piece-by-piece, as he said, he always struggled—he struggled to correctly pronounce the vast majority of the words he encountered during reading and, more often than not, he was unsuccessful.

Story telling is powerful in terms of developing students' language facilities. I asked Peter if he ever told stories in class and, if he did, the kinds of stories he told. His responses were: "yeah;" and "Whats go up and never come down." Actually, this is a riddle. Peter said that his teacher read stories to him sometimes (He said, "Suntines" for "Sometimes") and I did observe Ms. Joseph reading stories to the class from time to time.

In terms of the type of language his teacher spoke in class, Peter had this to say: "English and suntines she speak Patois." Although Standard English and Creole English are from the same language family tree, they are different in terms of their syntactic structure. As a consequence, it was essential to determine whether Peter always understood Ms. Joseph (who generally spoke St. Lucian Standard English) when she spoke to him, or to the class, in English. Peter said, "Yeah," to this question. I wanted to find out whether Peter found learning to speak, read, and write St. Lucian English difficult. When I used the word 'hard' instead of 'difficult,' he understood better and then said, "Yeah," but could not tell me why. Perhaps, Peter had a limited ability to articulate the difficulties he faced in learning St. Lucian Standard English.

I also asked Peter about his interest in the library. He said, "I don go to the library." His reasons were: "There have two people [students] does be there to write your name down and for you take a book. They say…if you cannot go and take a book—leave the book there." I probed Peter further to find out why he was so assertive about not going to the library. He explained, "My mother tell me that not to go and take a book there, koz if my baby sister tear the book, she will not pay the money." This is again likely reflective of the home literacy environment and the socio-economic status of the family.

When I asked Peter his purpose for learning to read, he hesitated, so I rephrased the question to, "Why are you learning to read?" He still thought for a while and replied, "Reading is the key." I asked him to explain what he meant by that. He paused and could not explain why. Being aware of this reading slogan which was highlighted in some St. Lucian schools, I then asked him, "Where did you hear this?" He immediately said, "In the school." Figure 4.7 shows Peter in his classroom paying attention to something.

Figure 4.7. Peter paying attention to something

I asked Peter whether writing was important to him. He replied, "Yeah." When I inquired further about his purpose for writing, he said: "Becau- I like to write." When asked what he liked to write about, he said, "Mathematics, language arts." I prompted him further and he said, "Stories." Yet, he had no recollection of any stories he had written. I asked Peter why he was learning English. He said, "So, when I talkin-, I talk betta." Perhaps, his desire to become a better English speaker was his reason for demonstrating a positive attitude, more often than not, in his language and literacy learning experiences in the classroom.

Peter's Interest, Attitude, and Self-Concept as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker of St. Lucian Standard English

When asked what he liked his family to read to him Peter replied, "Any story." Also, Peter said he liked to read to his family and friends. His reason was, "Koz I like to read to them." In turn, Peter said that he liked it when his mother or brothers read to him. His reason was, "Koz I like when they reading." Peter claimed that he liked to read in his classroom because, "You have to be a good reader." He also liked to read out loud in class. Peter liked it when his teacher read to him, "Koz she read nice." I asked Peter what he liked his teacher to read to him and he said, "Any story." I probed deeper to find out whether there was any one story he enjoyed in particular, but he thought for a long time and said nothing. Further, Peter said he liked to write in class, "Koz I like to write." I knew that Peter was a fluent Patois speaker, so I wanted to know which language (Patois or English) Peter preferred to speak in class. His response after a pause was 'English,' though he could not tell me why. In terms of his best friend in class, Peter identified more than three boys, "Koz they does play good." The game that they played was cricket—his favourite game. His favourite subject in school was mathematics, but he did not say why. When I asked Peter whether he preferred to watch television or read, he laughed (as if to say, you know the answer already) then said, "Television." Between the two activities, playing and reading, Peter, chose playing with friends over reading.

The analysis showed that Peter was positive, in many respects, about learning to speak, read, and write St. Lucian Standard English. When I asked Peter whether he thought of himself as a good reader or not, his answer was yes without a doubt. "What makes you think so?" I asked. He replied, "Myself." Peter's positive view of himself as a reader and writer and his actual ability to read and write were inconsistent, but this inconsistency might lead to positive consequences for him in the future, as he keeps 'picking up the pieces and trying again.' When I asked Peter to identify a good reader he knew and to say why he thought that person was a good reader, he identified two girls. He said: "They read to my teacher already." Further, I asked Peter whether he thought of himself as a good writer, and what made him think so. He said, "Yeah," "I does write a lot." Finally, when I asked Peter whether he viewed himself as a good English speaker, he said, "Yeah." When asked why he thought so, he said, "For nothing." In spite of Peter's inability to speak, read, and write St. Lucian Standard English, he really tried his best to learn; he understood the importance of schooling.

James

James' Language and Literacy Experiences at Home

I used a variety of questions to gain James' perspectives on his language and literacy experiences at home. James said that he did not have books to read at home, apart from his basal reader. However, he said that he read voluntarily on his own at home (I had to explain what I meant by the word 'voluntarily'), and the kind of thing he read was, according to him, "Andy and Rose book." Andy and Rose were two characters in a story in James' second-grade reader. On this basis, I concluded that James read only his second-grade reader at home. However, I realized that the lack of reading material at home put James at a disadvantage in that it prevented him from engaging in extensive reading which would help to improve his reading skills/ability. As a result, James could not tell me the titles or authors or plots of books he read at home. James stated clearly that he did not read to his family. According to James, his mother and father did not ask him to read to them. But, he claimed that his mother read to him everyday. James' response was not consistent with the fact that his mother told me that she could not read when we first met. James also said that he asked his family or a friend to read to him. The time he asked someone to read to him was, as he said, "When I come from to school." However, he could not tell me why he would do this. It could be that James wanted to please me, and it was easy for him to simply give me the answers he thought I was expecting. However, when it came to demonstrating his experiences with and knowledge and understanding of books, James seemed to have had no ideas for expressing his reason(s) for reading and wanting to be read to at home; he was unable to give some typical reasons that good readers give for liking to read and to be read to, for example, "You learn new things from books" (Juel, 1988, p. 442). I think it is reasonably accurate to conclude that James' reading experiences at home were very limited.

In terms of his writing, James said he wrote once a week at home. When asked to talk about what he wrote, he paused and said, "Sentence." Eventually, James said that his siblings were the ones reading and writing at home but not his parents. It was apparent that James did not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of what writing entails, particularly writing relating to composition. I think James' simple writing of sentences at his age (11 years old) was an indication that he was performing way below the expectations of the St. Lucia National Language Arts Curriculum for Primary Schools for third graders.

James' Language and Literacy Experiences in School

I asked James a series of questions to find out what his classroom language and literacy experiences were like for him. When James encountered a new word during reading, he said, "I ax somebody." He said that he did not tell stories in class, but could not tell why he didn't. However, he claimed that his teacher sometimes read stories to him and the class in general. When asked what language his teacher spoke in the classroom, James answered: "English." When I probed him, he said, "Sometim- she does speak Patois." This response was consistent with my own observations. I wanted to ascertain whether James always understood his teacher when she spoke English and James said that he did. He went on to say that he sometimes found it difficult learning to speak, read, and write English, but he could not tell me why. It could be that James had difficulty articulating his experiences in the classroom. James claimed that sometimes he went to the library to borrow books so he could read. When asked how he chose his books, James replied: "When I take a book and I open it and it's not good I put it back." I asked, "How do you know it's not good?" He said, "Hmn…." Then he said, "I don like to read it." James had some internalized criteria for what makes a good book. But I think he was missing certain strategies for choosing books, for example, looking at the title and predicting the content of the book. James did not know what I meant by the term 'librarian', suggesting that he was not familiar with a librarian. For James, reading is important because, according to him, "It can make you pass." Meaning, it can make one pass exams. James also thought that writing is important but could not tell me why he thought so. I think, like Peter, James was not clear on his purpose for writing. I share Browne's (2003) sentiments:

> Children need to know what it is they're learning to do, so that they're clear on what it is. They need to believe that this learning that they're

> undertaking makes a difference to them, and to their lives, that it adds something to what they've got already. Relevance is important. (p. 25)

Finally, James' reason for learning English was, "Koz I want to talk well." Figure 4.8 shows James in his classroom interacting with his peer.

[redacted]

Figure 4.8. James interacting with his peer

James' Interest, Attitude, and Self-Concept as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker of St. Lucian Standard English

James claimed that his favourite thing he read at home was 'Andy and Rose.' I asked James whether he could remember anything about Andy and Rose. He smiled, and said: “Andy and Rose are sitting at the table. [He is thinking] Andy and Rose go shopping.” James said he liked it when his family read to him, but could not tell me why. What he liked them to read to him was, “Compere Lapin book.” (Compere Lapin is a St. Lucian folktale.) Generally, St. Lucians like to listen to folktales, fables and fairytales; I remember how I loved to listen to mom and dad’s folktales, fables, and fairytales as a child (I still do), so, perhaps James is no exception. James said that he liked to write at home, and when asked what he liked to write at home, he said, “Compere Lapin and the Tar Baby.” James probably meant ‘story’ since *Compere Lapin and the Tar Baby* is the title of a story on page 16 in James’ second grade reader. He said that he still had the writing at home. I expressed my interest in reading James’ home composition, and asked him whether he could bring it to me the following day so that he could share it with me. He just shrugged. James did not bring me his composition. It was difficult to know how to interpret James’ response. However, it was not a surprise to me at all.

In terms of his attitude toward reading in class, James claimed that he liked to read in class. His reason was the same as Peter’s, “Koz I like to read.” James also said that he liked to read out loud in class because he felt happy about doing that. Also, James liked it when his teacher read to him because he felt happy. When asked what he liked his teacher to read to him, James replied, “I don know-oh?” (with a tag question). James said that he liked to write in class, but could not tell why. What he liked to write in class were sentences. In terms of the language (Patois or English) James preferred to speak in class, he said that it was English, and his reason was, “Koz I like English.” It was necessary to explore James’ language choice, since I knew he was fluent in Patois. Interestingly, James’ best friend was also one of Peter’s best friends. According to James, “Anyfing he have, he does share wif me." When I asked James what his favourite subject was, he seemed confused. So, I explained what I meant and he said with a broad smile that it was mathematics. He could not tell why. (I observed that whenever I used the word 'favourite' to James, he seemed confused.) Like Peter, James would rather watch television than read. His reason for making this choice was, "Koz I does see nice pictures." Also, he gave priority to playing with his friends over reading. The kind of game he liked to play with his friends was, "Bat and ball." He meant cricket. His reason for liking this game was, "Koz I like to play."

James thought of himself as a good English speaker, but could not tell why he held this positive image of himself. However, in terms of reading and writing, James did not think of himself as a good reader and writer even after I explained the terms 'reader' and 'writer' to him which seemed to confuse him at first. Finally, James identified a boy in his classroom as a good reader he knew. His reason was, "Everyday he go home, he does read." I deduced that James' response indicated that he was aware of the difference between the amount of reading done by a good reader and the amount done by a poor reader. James' response raises a critical question, that is, why do good readers frequently read both in and out of school? There are lots of variables that can be attributed to this disparity: motivation, decoding and comprehensive skills and strategies, reading experiences, and so on.

John

John's Language and Literacy Experiences at Home

John said that he had books at home to read but that he did not read on his own at home. His reason was, "For nothing." I wanted to know if he ever read to his family and

John revealed that he sometimes read to his brothers who asked him to read to them. When asked what kinds of things he read to his brothers at home, John's reply was, "Books." I probed John to state the title of a book that he read to his brothers at home. His response was, "Andy and Rose." This was probably not the title of the book that John read. Andy and Rose were two characters in a story in John's second-grade reader. This response revealed that John was not familiar with book titles since he did little or no reading. I wanted to hear about John's mother in particular and what role she played in John's home literacy. John claimed that his mother never asked him to read to her and neither did she read to him. John also claimed that he did not ask his mother to read to him, he only asked his brothers. John could not tell why he only asked his brothers to read to him and not his mother. A reason could be that John's brothers were the ones who encouraged him to read and could read themselves, so he viewed them as his reading buddies. Also, John said that he did some writing at home but, like Peter and James, he could not account for the kind of writing he did. In terms of those who influenced John to read and write at home, John said, "My brothers does read and write at home."

John's Language and Literacy Experiences in School

John said that he asked his cousin, who was in his class, for assistance when he came across an unfamiliar word during reading. He said, "I ax [Paula], my cousin" (who was in the same class with him). John did not tell stories in class. His reason was, "I don like to say stories." However, he liked to listen to the stories Ms Joseph read to them sometimes. John may have been too shy to tell stories in class. I had observed that John seemed shy whenever he was called upon to answer a question in class. In terms of the language John's teacher utilized in the classroom, John said that it was solely English.

John was adamant in his opinion, and said, "No Miss, I doesn hear her speak in Patois in class." John's opinion was not in concert with mine or with Peter and James', although James, himself, was reluctant to say that Ms. Joseph sometimes spoke Patois. It appeared to me that both John and James felt they would be doing injustice to their teacher had they associated her with Patois speaking in the classroom. Also, John said that he always understood his teacher when she spoke, of course, English. However, he experienced difficulty in learning to speak, read, and write English. But this is not uncommon as we know people have much better receptive language abilities than expressive abilities.

John said that he sometimes went to the school library to read. He said: "Yes Miss, I goin- ther, Miss." "Sometimes read." He also said, "We choose which book we want," and "I choose a book." John could not articulate his criteria/strategies for selecting books. At first, I thought John believed reading was not important because he said "No" to the question I asked him. However, he expressed a different opinion regarding the importance of reading when I realized that he did not seem to understand the word 'important' and explained it to him. He then said it was important, "Because it make me learn." When asked if writing was important to him, John, at first, said, "No," but soon gave a "Yes" answer when I reworded the question again by explaining the word 'important.' However, he could not tell me why he thought writing was important, indicating that John did not have a clear purpose for learning to write. Also, John's purpose for learning to speak English was "To talk well." Browne (2003) posits that one learns most effectively if there is a clear purpose. Figure 4.9 shows John in his classroom observing his peer during seatwork.

Figure 4. 9. John observing his peer's work

John's Interest, Attitude, and Self-Concept as a Reader, Writer, and Speaker of St. Lucian Standard English

Although John did not like to read on his own at home, he liked to read to his brothers. His reason was, "Because I doesn get nothing to do." He was saying that he read because there was nothing else to do during those times. His favourite thing that he read, himself, was, 'Andy and Rose' and, also, that was what he enjoyed listening to, when his brothers read to him. He liked it when his brothers read to him. When I asked about his writing, John said, "Yes Miss, I like to write at home." His reason was, "I does like to write." (Figure 4.10 reveals John sharpening his pencil.)

Figure 4.10. John sharpening his pencil

John said he liked to read in class, but he couldn't say why. He also claimed that he liked to read out loud in class. However, based on my observations, John never volunteered to read aloud in class. Ms. Joseph did not call upon him to read aloud either. It's possible she did not call on him because he had such difficulty reading—to begin with, his repertoire of basic sight words was extremely poor. Like Peter and James, John said that he liked it when his teacher read to him and the class in general. It was 'Andy and Rose' that John liked his teacher to read to him. Like James, John was referring to two characters in the story entitled *New Friends* (on page 8 of his second-grade reader). John and James seemed to like the two characters Andy and Rose, over the other two characters, Ken and May, in the story, and they seemed to like that story best. The characters in the story were all children with whom they could identify. Similar to his liking for reading, John said, “Yes Miss, I does like to write in the class,” but did not give reasons.

I knew that John was able to speak Patois/Creole French quite well, apart from his native basilectal-Creole English, and that he had expressed earlier on that he liked to speak Patois. But John said he preferred to speak English in the classroom. He gave me an interesting reason: “Because…in the school that’s there.” (He meant, “That’s what’s out there in the school.”) Not surprising, John’s best friend was the one with whom he always played in class. John’s favourite subject in school was science. He explained, “Because it making me learn.” Finally, like Peter and James, John preferred to watch television and play with his friends than to read. John did not care to elaborate, when asked why.

John did not hesitate to inform me that he did not think of himself as a good reader, writer, or speaker. He said, “Because I don really know the words,” and said, “Because I am somebody that like to talk Patois.” John viewed his cousin (Paula) as a good reader, and gave credit to her, as she was the one on whose shoulder he leaned when he needed assistance in reading.

Similarities: Peter, James, and John

Peter, James, and John, were similar in many ways. These three boys were from low socioeconomic status families in St. Lucia, and they said they were not frequently read to or afforded the opportunity to engage in extensive reading and writing experiences at home or in their communities. If this were the case, they entered school with very poor knowledge and understanding of the structures of St. Lucian Standard English. The three students did not seem to be familiar with story structures, book titles, authors, and other concepts relating to books or reading and writing, and had limited spelling and vocabulary skills and ideation (the ability to generate and organize ideas) that are necessary for oral expression and writing. Also, the students lacked comprehension and word recognition/decoding skills and strategies that would foster their listening and reading skills, and did not have a clear purpose for learning to speak, read, and write English. The point that should be noted here, based on the implications of Heath's (1983) research, is that it is likely that the three students had some experience with print at home. Their experiences can be built on in a classroom with a print-rich environment. In addition, they stated their preferences for other subject areas over language arts and for watching television and engaging in sports over reading. They found learning to speak, read, and write St. Lucian Standard English difficult for them. They all said that they liked to read and write and liked to be read to. I realized, in certain instances, the three students tried to please me and gave me responses they believed I was expecting to hear. Based on my knowledge and understanding of St. Lucian culture and my teaching and research expertise, I was able to identify the data that seemed unreliable and those that were reasonably accurate.

In the next chapter of this dissertation, I will synthesize the findings from this research project and put forward my conclusions, recommendations for practice in St. Lucian primary school classrooms, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> *Those who view teaching as an art see education as a very complicated and challenging profession that is continually changing. They believe that there is no "formula" for teaching that can be mastered and then applied in all circumstances to all students. Rather, as educators interact with students and plan for the curriculum, they must continually rethink, reframe, and reconfigure the content and process of teaching. Although this approach makes teaching far more difficult, it also means that the rewards are great for those who continue to work at improving what they do.*
>
> Michael L. Henniger (2004, p. 6)

Beginning with Myself

I believe teaching is an art. It becomes an art when teachers think about the content to be taught, consider the students' needs, abilities, and interests, and creatively teach in the classroom. I believe that when teaching practice is based on this creative/reflective view of teaching, quality learning is likely to take place. I see myself as a teacher and curriculum maker who believes in the value of the creative/reflective aspects of teaching. That is why I became concerned about the large number of students, particularly basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students throughout the primary schools in St. Lucia, who encounter serious reading and writing difficulties while their peers continue to excel as they move from grade to grade. At worse, these students exit the education system without being able to effectively use St. Lucian expected/Standard English. These young adults are placed in a predicament where they are unlikely to experience personal satisfaction or to become lifelong learners. Also, these individuals are hindered in their attempts to become responsible citizens with the capacity to make significant contributions to the educational, social, and technological advancement of their communities and their country at large. This situation has more often than not forced me to reckon with some disturbing thoughts that have led me to question the teaching approaches and learning opportunities provided in language arts classrooms in St. Lucian primary schools.

In my quest for a solution to these educational problems, I saw it as more beneficial to focus primarily on the teacher and the teaching rather than the students themselves; that is, to focus on the pedagogical approaches and learning opportunities that Ms. Joseph provided in the classroom for Peter, James, and John. My reason for making this choice resonates with Rhodes and Shanklin's (1993) view:

> Admittedly, it is often easier to assume or decide that the problem is in the student rather than to make changes in the literacy environment or in our methods of instruction. Too often, we try to fit the square-pegged student into the round hole that is the classroom rather than trying to 'square' the classroom so the student who is struggling can not only fit but thrive. (p. 16)

Referring to students whose home language differs from the language of the school, but may, very likely, have some experience with print, Clay (1991) writes: "The teacher's task is to help children to make links between what they can already do with language and the new challenges of school" (p. 27). Therefore, the ultimate responsibility for creating an effective language and literacy learning environment remains with the teacher and not the students per se. Hence, my purpose for conducting this study, as previously stated, was to gain a better understanding of the teaching approaches and learning opportunities or experiences that were provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected or Standard English language.

The preceding discussion and the review of the related literature have indicated that the language and literacy problems that Creole-English speakers face in St. Lucian classrooms are not as superficial in nature as they might seem. These problems are rooted in historical, political, sociocultural, and educational issues that underlie the pedagogic landscape. Consequently, this dissertation is not just about teaching the three participating basilectal-Creole-English students to speak, read, and write Standard English. Helping the students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language is not just about teaching 'perfect grammar' to a set of students who have moved from grade-to-grade without achieving the expected learning. This dissertation addresses a number of additional issues pertinent to the St. Lucian primary school system that are likely to affect the school and classroom in which the students learn. Basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students need to learn Standard English for personal satisfaction. They need to speak their native language and keep their culture to maintain their self-esteem. They need to get a "good" education and stay in school to acquire skills and strategies (cognitive, affective, and interpersonal) and values to gain socio-political consciousness in order to promote themselves and their society as a whole. These needs are, in fact, based on the realities of life, hence, teachers need to take them into consideration in order to foster a good life for those students as they grow and develop into adults. These are the realities of life that I was concerned about and they are, in fact, grounded in Ladson-Billings' (2002) theoretical construct of "culturally relevant pedagogy". This pedagogy rests on three propositions, "successful teaching focuses on students' academic achievement, successful teaching supports students' cultural competence, and successful teaching promotes students' socio-political consciousness" (p. 110-111).

However, there are underlying issues that can affect the achievement of these goals in St. Lucian primary school classrooms, as indicated above; more specifically, in Ms. Joseph's classroom. To gain an in-depth understanding of this complex situation, I have addressed this specific research question:

What teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences are provided in a third-grade language arts classroom in St. Lucia to help three basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected English language?

Findings

Support for Teachers

Support for teachers is a vital component in facilitating the professional autonomy of teachers. Expertise in curriculum planning plays a major role in this respect. As the purpose of curriculum is to enhance human wellbeing, happiness, liberation, meaning, and other qualities of life (Pratt, 1990), it becomes indispensable for curriculum planners to consider this relevant question: Are there issues of greater significance to which we should first pay attention? The point I emphasize here is not so much a matter of what is worthwhile, but of priorities among many possible choices. Not only should students' needs be met, but teachers' needs should also be met since they are the ones working directly with students. They are the ones who will eventually implement and use the new curriculum entrusted to them. It is, therefore, crucial for curriculum planners to help empower teachers in their classrooms by providing the conditions in which teachers can help students develop their full potential.

Particularly, there is a systemic problem in St. Lucian primary schools regarding support for teachers. Many teachers are disempowered in their classrooms because, in the first place, their classrooms are not structured to facilitate language and literacy teaching and learning; it is beyond teachers' control to restructure their classrooms. Generally, St. Lucian primary school teachers are faced with other constraints such as limited time, money, and other limited resources made available to them by the St. Lucian government. I think the constraints that teachers deal with on a daily basis outnumber the resources with which they are provided to teach effectively. These constraints do affect the physical environment of the classroom.

The Role of the Physical Environment

Many important aspects of the physical environment, which could have facilitated language and literacy learning and teaching, were beyond Ms Joseph's control. The physical structure of the classroom was unlike most of today's western classrooms in which there is much flexibility. The desks were bolted to the floor in a row-column arrangement and could not be organized in clusters to facilitate group work and to allow the teacher easy access to each student in the class. There was a need for more space in which students could come together for whole-class discussions and other activities. The teacher needed more space for setting up storage areas for students' books and supplies, for setting up book bins to store students' individual work, for setting up bulletin boards, and various learning centers (for example, reading, writing, and dramatic play centers).

Given the fact that the desks in the classroom were of a sturdy, floor-fixed design, it was not possible for Ms. Joseph to arrange the desks in clusters to facilitate various group activities, and to create more flexibility for her and her students. Ms. Joseph was aware of the importance of grouping, as indicated in her words: "The desks and chairs are cemented in the floor and we cannot move about to put the children to work in groups as they are supposed to. It's very difficult." Consequently, she tried to compensate for this by bringing in a few chairs (from outside the classroom) on which students could sit for group work. This improvisation did not work out very well in terms of comfort, however, as some students in the group had no choice but to remain standing (and stooping after a while) until the end of the activity. This difficulty may account for Ms. Joseph's infrequent use of group activities in her lessons.

Almost all the walls in Ms. Joseph's classroom contained displays in various forms: colourful charts, picture-word charts, word cards, name cards, days-of-the-week cards, months-of-the-year cards, and a welcome card. This colourful environment was designed to support the students' language and literacy learning. However, the charts were rarely used to directly support the students' learning. On one occasion I saw Ms Joseph refer to a chart to support students' spelling.

The classroom environment did not include a well-stocked, well-designed library center. The various displays on the walls were placed under their appropriate subject-area labels however there was not a label to indicate a library area. Although the classroom contained trade books, these books did not invite the students into reading. The books were few and were placed on a table at the back of the classroom with no particular organization. There was no book display and the arrangement of the available books was not especially inviting or appealing. None of the students picked up a book to read during break-time while I was visiting the classroom. They chose other activities instead.

There are two key points I stress here which pertain to the presence of a classroom library. Firstly, Cunningham and Allington (2003) are of the opinion that the mere presence of classroom libraries in schools with large numbers of poor children is not enough. These authors maintain that "the classroom libraries in these schools need to include several hundred books" (p. 260). Secondly, of equal importance is the fact that the library must be well-designed. Morrow and Weinstein (1982) found that when library centers contained small numbers of books and were uninviting, children did not choose to use them during free-play time. However, when the design features were improved, the children's library usage increased tremendously. In this respect, my study resonates, in part, with Morrow and Weinstein's findings. On the whole, the students were disadvantaged by the lack of a literacy-rich classroom environment to support their language and literacy abilities and interests. The school library did not compensate for this inadequacy as it was also poorly organized and equipped.

Quality and variety of books are two important factors teachers need to take into consideration in selecting books for their classroom library. Unfortunately, quality and variety of books did not characterize this St. Lucian classroom learning environment. The only way in which the classroom could have been stocked with a variety of books to match the interests and abilities of her students was through raising funds. It is possible that with the assistance of the students' parents and various financial institutions in St. Lucia, books could have been purchased for her classroom library. Such a project would have helped to demonstrate the importance of books in the classroom. It should be noted that it has become quite commonplace in St. Lucia to find primary school teachers, principals, and parents embarking on fund-raising projects in order to purchase supplies for their schools. Sufficient numbers and kinds of books and other materials and supplies were not provided through funding from the Ministry of Education. However, it should not be up to schools, teachers and parents to raise money for these items. They should be provided in a way that they are free and available to all.

In conjunction with making more reading materials available, I believe there are ways in which teachers might enhance the environment to create a more supportive space for reading. What I have observed in a few American and Canadian primary school classrooms is that there were bookshelves on which books were stored. These books were colour-coded according to type. Books about plants, for example, were identified with green dots on their spines and were grouped together on the shelf marked *Plants*. Each category of books was identified by a different colour. This colour-coded technique made it more accessible for students to self-select books and place them back in their appropriate places on the shelves. This technique also helped to facilitate the handling of those books. A simpler alternative is storing books in cardboard boxes or plastic tubs. Labels for identifying the type of book in those containers were placed on the front of the containers. For easy access, also, the categories of books were colour-coded on the front cover of the books. These techniques are not culture-specific; they can be embraced in St. Lucian primary school classrooms, especially the use of containers.

This research has demonstrated to me the importance of the physical environment in helping young children, especially basilectal-Creole-English students to become proficient users of English. The physical environment of this classroom did not enhance the students' language and literacy learning in a significant way.

The Role of the Students' Textbooks

As described in the literature review, 'culturally relevant teaching' is a theoretical construct that focuses on students' holistic development. It is a pedagogy, according to Ladson-Billings (1994), that empowers students intellectually, emotionally, socially, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This type of teaching uses the students' culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. For example, the negative effects are brought about by not seeing one's history, culture, or background represented in the textbook or curriculum or by seeing that history, culture, or background distorted by the dominant culture. The students' basal reader, their activity book and their workbook were prepared by the St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports (2000). These books incorporated Ladson-Billings' (1994) notion of 'culturally relevant teaching,' as indicated on the back cover of the texts: "The content [as well as the front covers] of the new series is drawn from the everyday lives of the children, with great use made of people, objects and scenes in the immediate environment" (Back cover). It was evident that the teams of experienced, practicing primary school teachers and officers of the Ministry of Education, who embarked on the development of those learning/teaching materials, had made a conscious effort to respond to the call for culturally relevant teaching. Hence, they provided students with texts in which most of the content related to their daily lives. Students were able to identify with the materials and, as a result, they were likely to pay more attention to them and demonstrate a greater level of engagement in them.

However, I do not think that the St. Lucian Ministry of Education had done a very effective job of explaining and fostering the notion of culturally relevant teaching to primary school teachers. First of all, in the introduction of the basal reader, where several concepts were emphasized and made clear to teachers, the notion of culturally relevant teaching was not mentioned in any way whatsoever. The statement on the back cover ("The main content in all the books is drawn from the everyday lives of the children with great use made of people, objects and scenes in the immediate environment") says very little to teachers, especially novice teachers, about the usefulness of this type of teaching in the St. Lucian school context. It is not surprising that some teachers may not see the relevance of those texts and thus not demonstrate much interest in them with the students.

Secondly, Ladson-Billings (1994) makes it clear that "these cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (p. 18). What Ladson-Billings is emphasizing here is that the notion of culturally relevant teaching is very significant and should form an integral part of the curriculum of a school. A statement written on the back cover of the students' texts reads: "The content is closely linked to the St. Lucia Language Arts curriculum." This means that the idea of culturally relevant teaching indicated in the texts originated from the school curriculum. The curriculum presents lots of principles on language learning, two of which point to the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy. One principle of language learning regarding culture is "Language, culture and identity are closely linked. Respect for a child's cultural and linguistic background helps to develop a positive sense of self and motivates him/her to learn." The other one is "A child's competence in his or her first language is the foundation on which literacy in the language of instruction is built." These principles, indeed, are at the heart of the literature on cultural diversity in the classroom. However, an extensive examination of the school curriculum document revealed that the curriculum was not explicit in the presentation of those principles. Consequently, this shortcoming did not allow teachers to fully understand the idea behind culturally relevant teaching, thus, making it difficult to put it into practice in their classrooms. So, how does a teacher, whose background knowledge and understanding on cultural diversity in the classroom is limited, respect a child's cultural and linguistic background in the classroom, when no example is provided, at least, in the suggested activities in the curriculum?

The Role of Curriculum and the St. Lucian Ministry of Education

Many of the assumptions on which the St. Lucian curriculum is built need to be challenged. The assumption is made in the curriculum that all children can speak English. However, this is not the reality for most St. Lucian classrooms. Therefore, the children are being disadvantaged by not receiving adequate instruction in English language and through the curriculum not being delivered in Creole English.

There is a section in the language arts curriculum, entitled *The Language Situation in St. Lucia*, which acknowledges that children whose first language is a Creole are faced with a peculiar problem when they enter school. The language arts program also proposes the adoption of ESL (English as a Second Language) strategies to adequately meet the needs of those children. However, no illustrations are provided that would help inform teachers about the strategies they can employ in their classrooms. For example, one key strategy that the curriculum could have highlighted is that teachers should allow Creole-speaking children to use their native language where necessary during language arts instruction. Importantly, a substantial piece of the literature on this aspect could have been presented in the curriculum that would explain the significance of utilizing such a strategy. It must be understood that, to reiterate Ladson-Billings' (1994) view, these cultural referents "are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (p. 18). What is also crucial is that teachers who have little knowledge or no knowledge at all of the concept of ESL are helpless and will not be able to adopt ESL strategies to make their teaching more effective as proposed by the language arts curriculum. St. Lucian curriculum developers are very much aware of the fact that some primary school teachers have loudly proclaimed that they have no time to do extra curricular activities. Other teachers are not aware of the significance of professional development and the value of researching a topic such as ESL in the library and/or on the Internet. Some teachers are likely to be complacent and will not question the contents of the curriculum, and will not go beyond what is written in the document.

Pratt (1990) writes about the benefits of clarity in curriculum planning.

> The process of curriculum planning is a process of clarification and articulation, and this is the rationale also for writing curriculum intentions. There is a discipline that develops and is imposed by forcing oneself to state clearly intentions that one at first grasps only vaguely. There are risks in this activity, risks of trivialization on the one hand and verbosity on the other, but there are greater risks—of confusion and ineffectiveness—when we fail to articulate our intentions. Clearly stated

> intentions for a curriculum also provide a focus for instruction, a means of communication with students and colleagues, and directions for the development of evaluative criteria. (p. 42)

When a curriculum posits principles without explicit explanations, it is like giving teachers candles that cannot be lighted in the dark. Teachers are left to continue with teaching methods that have been producing success for some children but not for all children, and those methods will continue to predominate in the classroom learning environment. Given this background, I conclude that the officials from the St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports have not fully embraced the notion of 'culturally relevant teaching.' In spite of the intervening years, this conclusion is congruent with Craig's (1983) assertion: "The curricula of schools still tend to be restrictive in terms of the use of subject-matter that nonstandard speakers in their various age-groups might find interesting" (p. 73). In spite of a new curriculum, this restriction is still likely to impact classrooms today.

There are a number of reasons why St. Lucian curriculum developers are not easily receptive to change when it comes to planning a language arts curriculum that fully embraces the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy. These include: historical, sociocultural, political, and educational reasons. For example, St. Lucia's historical-educational background shows us that "while in the past there was disagreement as to whether instruction should emphasize French or English, Creole was apparently never given much attention" (Frank, 1993, p. 50). Frank goes on to explain that first there existed in times past (colonial times) a very strong antagonistic attitude toward Creole, especially among the numerous Barbadian headmasters, teachers, police, and civil servants brought over to hold key positions in St. Lucian society. They rejected Creole as something 'backward' since it was identified historically with slavery. Consequently, Creole speakers harbored deeply ambivalent attitudes toward their language (Garrett, 2000). Second, St. Lucian Creole French was an unwritten language while published educational materials were available in English. Therefore, it was much easier to set up educational programs based on English than on Creole. Third, the British government viewed English as the language that would facilitate economic development, nation building, and integration into British Empire. These negative attitudes and perspectives about Creole have become a legacy in St. Lucian postcolonial life, and the education sector is no exception.

Despite the various attempts that have been made to save Creole from suppression or attrition, the language continues to be viewed negatively. However, it is a language that some St. Lucians use as a vehicle for survival. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that similar views (if not the same) may have influenced the curriculum developers to suppress the notion of culturally relevant teaching in the way that I have explained. My view is consistent with Frank's (1993) notion: "There is still a strong sentiment among some prominent figures in the field of education in St. Lucia that English is good for the people and Creole is bad. English represents for them enlightenment and progress, and Creole represents backwardness" (p. 51). This discussion is timely. It evokes discussion on the next finding regarding language and literacy teaching approaches and learning opportunities provided in the elementary classroom for Peter, James, and John.

The Role of the Literacy Approaches Prevalent in the Classroom

As has been mentioned, Ladson-Billings' (2002) theoretical construct of "culturally relevant pedagogy" rests on three propositions. The first proposition is "Successful teaching focuses on students' academic achievement" (p. 110). Ladson-Billings explains that students' academic achievement is measured by intellectual growth and the ability to produce knowledge. The key question she asks is whether students can read, write, problem-solve, and make critical decisions. Each of these, she says, can represent examples of students' academic achievement. I use the first proposition to discuss the teaching approaches and learning opportunities Ms. Joseph provided in the classroom to promote Peter, James, and John's academic achievement.

A teacher's instructional philosophy drives everything he/she does in the classroom and will, therefore, have an impact on the students' academic achievement. Ms. Joseph claimed that her philosophy of teaching language and literacy evolved from the CETT (Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training) program which she regarded as her theoretical orientation. The program advocated a combination of approaches to teaching language arts—a meaning-based approach and skills-based approach. The CETT program was based on what is referred to by Farris et al. (2004) as 'embedded code or meaning emphasis phonics teaching.' Farris et al. write, "Embedded phonics teaching occurs in the context of real texts" (p. 112). They go on to describe what a meaning emphasis phonics lesson entails:

1. Begin with the skill in the context of a story, poem, or rhyme.
2. Move to word play that includes blending.
3. Apply the skill in the context of a new selection.

In effect, what the CETT program advocated was a balanced/integrated approach to the teaching of language arts. Lapp and Flood (1997) posit that a balanced approach is attained when students are taught language skills and strategies in the context of whole texts. Freebody and Luke's (1990) *four resources model* demonstrates the concept of a balanced approach to literacy instruction. Further, Spiegel (1999) explains the notion of a balanced approach,

> A balanced approach is a decision-making approach through which a teacher makes thoughtful decisions each day about the best way to help each child become a better reader and writer. A balanced approach requires and enables a teacher to reflect on what he or she is doing and to modify instruction daily based on the needs of each individual learner. The modifications are drawn from a broad repertoire of strategies and a sound understanding of children, learning and the theoretical bases of these strategies. (p. 13)

A comparison between Ms. Joseph's teaching approach and the meaning emphasis phonics approach is necessary. Ms. Joseph's aim was always to teach language arts skills during her lessons. She followed the first step of the approach by beginning to teach the skill in the context of a passage or story. For example, she started by reading a short story to the students. The second stage required Ms. Joseph to directly teach the skill (conduct a minilesson) within the context of that same story, using an activity that is interesting, interactive, and collaborative. However, during the minilessons, Ms. Joseph encountered difficulty in creating activities that were interesting, interactive, and collaborative—activities that would facilitate a much better understanding of those language arts skills and, thereby aid retention and application. She relied on a question-answer-feedback strategy often used for instructional purposes, as revealed in Chapter 4.

The question-answer-feedback strategy can be beneficial as it helps students to pay attention to whatever aspect of the lesson the teacher wants to emphasize, thereby fostering learning. However, this strategy becomes a problem when it is used to the exclusion of other strategies. It becomes a problem, particularly, in critical reading or higher level response questions (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Questions are often devised on the spur of the moment, often hastily and without close attention to the material involved, and they tend to be questions requiring recall of specific details, for example, "What colour was the van?" "Where were they going?" Questions of literal detail are usually much easier to construct than most other types of questions, but they require only simple recall of the material and fail to measure anything beyond literal comprehension. Main idea questions, on the other hand, help students to become aware of the relationships among details. They encourage students to engage in higher-order thinking as opposed to literal understanding of the details of a text. This is not to say that literal comprehension questions should not be used. They are important when teaching very young students to become readers; students need to first learn how to assimilate the information these questions cover. But it can become problematic when teachers do not give children the opportunity to ask and respond to larger socio-political questions—questions that would enable them to make critical decisions and develop problem-solving skills (Ladson-Billings, 2002). Unfortunately, Peter, James, and John encountered mainly literal detail questions in the classroom and their opportunity to answer other types of comprehension questions was very limited. They were not encouraged to develop higher-order thinking skills through questions based on identifying the main idea, making inferences, understanding sequences, evaluating, and responding critically and creatively to a text.

Ms. Joseph moved to the final stage of the meaning emphasis phonics approach when she applied the skill learned in the context of a new selection. This is intended to provide reinforcement for the students. Burns et al. (1999) caution: "Although reinforcement in phonics [or any other skill] instruction may include practice with single letters and sounds, it must include application of the strategy or skill with whole words and longer pieces of discourse, such as sentences and paragraphs" (p. 95). They went on to say: "We believe this practice should be expanded to include work with whole selections, such as predictable books that contain the letter-sound association that is being emphasized" (p. 95). However, Ms. Joseph encountered challenges here, partly because of the lack of reading materials available to her and the students in the classroom. Peter, James, and John contended instead with lots of skill drills using worksheets, their workbooks, or exercise books. Ms. Joseph fell back into the St. Lucian primary school's traditional method of teaching language and literacy skills in isolation, in which meaning making was not the main objective. This is a systemic problem based on the lack of resources available to most primary school teachers. According to Allington (2002), "A real concern is that, when instruction becomes too explicit, children never learn when and how to use the strategies profitably and successfully in their independent reading" (p. 744).

It was obvious in Ms. Joseph's lessons that among the skills she taught she, generally, placed more emphasis on teaching vocabulary than on grammar, phonics, and reading comprehension. Ms. Joseph had explained that she had an extremely "slow" group of children and, as a result, she had to pace herself according to the level they had attained. The slow children were not receiving any form of reading intervention and so she was the only resource available to them. She was greatly challenged in trying to meet the needs of the slow children, at the same time as meeting the needs of the more advanced readers and writers in the classroom. She also explained that the other class of third graders in the school was able to read an entire story in a day or two, unlike her own class. This fact seemed to have been one of Ms. Joseph's greatest preoccupations, as she wanted her students to achieve well and pass their exams. She was searching for strategies to help her students read the short passages she brought to the class and a few from their basal readers.

The teaching of vocabulary was one strategy Ms. Joseph opted to use the most. The students received a lot of practice in pronouncing the new words and finding their meanings through the question-answer-feedback strategy. She would have them read the same text (normally the whole class and sentence-by-sentence) the next day (or two) to teach other word recognition skills during the language arts lessons. This strategy, however, turned out to be a very difficult way for Peter, James, and John, (and for the vast majority of the students in the class) to learn how to read. The students struggled to recall the words. Peter in particular had difficulty in reading the words he had learned. In fact, he echoed the other students' reading during whole-class reading times and became an expert at that. John would not venture into the whole-class reading at all; he did not participate. James, on the other hand, read at times but with minimal success. The three students' decoding and comprehension skills and strategies were weak—far below grade level.

Additionally, writing was done in the classroom only within the context of worksheet, workbook, chalkboard, or exercise book/notebook activities. I know that Ms. Joseph was familiar with the writing process approach because she spoke about it during one of our conversations but she seemed to hold low expectations of the students because of their very poor ability to spell. She believed the students in her classroom would not be able to handle the rigors of composing a piece of writing—one that would meet the expected standard of the third-grade level. So she provided only workbook writing experiences for them, which she believed would help them to spell and use grammar correctly. She did not teach her students to think about real ideas and organize those ideas in order to communicate with others, to present their points of view, and to be understood (Freebody & Luke, 1990). The process approach to writing, for example, has received recognition for its positive effects on students' increased reading and writing competencies, since they need to engage in much rereading of their drafts and of the materials they research for their chosen writing topics. Peter, James, and John would probably have benefited from such an approach. In order to develop as writers (also readers), the three students "must begin to take risks and experiment with new elements" (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993, p. 267).

Longitudinal studies (Juel, 1988) reveal that there is almost a 90% chance that a child who is poor at reading at the end of grade one will remain a poor reader at the end of fourth grade. However, instructional intervention is a viable solution for such children (Strickland, 2000). An early literacy intervention program takes a child from his/her current ability level to an age-appropriate level in reading and writing. The school had recognized the need for an early literacy intervention program (especially for students such as James who was much older than his classmates) and had placed Peter, James, and John in such a program from the second grade. However, the three students had not been successful in the special education teacher's pullout program conducted in the school. In third grade, these students still found it hard to develop effective processing for reading and writing. There are probably several reasons why the students did not succeed in the program. One of the reasons is that the three students did not receive extra help on a daily/regular basis. There are two literacy intervention programs that have a great deal of research evidence supporting their effectiveness: *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 1985) and *Success for All* (Slavin et al., 1996). In both programs, tutoring sessions are provided for students such as Peter, James, and John on a daily basis. One of the things I think that would contribute to the success of a literacy intervention program at the school (since there are lots of poor readers and writers) is that the special education teacher needs to choose an appropriate literacy intervention program that would accommodate the three students on a daily basis. *Success for All* is one such program, since it allows for homogeneous regrouping by reading level across the primary grades.

The Role of Oral Language Strategies in the Classroom

The second proposition upon which Ladson-Billings' (2002) theoretical construct of "culturally relevant pedagogy" rests is that "Successful teaching supports students' cultural competence" (p. 110). In this regard, I focus primarily on the teaching approaches and learning opportunities Ms. Joseph provided for Peter, James, and John in the classroom to support their *cultural competence*. Ladson-Billings (2002) explains what she means by "cultural competence." She explains:

> Cultural competence refers to the ability of students to grow in understanding and respect for their culture of origin. Rather than experiencing the alienating effects of education where school-based learning detaches students from their home culture, cultural competence is a way for students to be bicultural and facile in the ability to move between school and home cultures. (p. 111)

As a teacher of Creole-speaking learners, Ms. Joseph demonstrated an awareness of the on-going controversy regarding the use of students' Creole-native language in the classroom, and the overcorrection strategy that follows its use. Delpit (2002) is of the opinion that overcorrection blocks reading development in a number of ways, for example, "a complete focus on code and pronunciation blocks children's understanding that reading is essentially a meaning-making process" (p. 127). Constant correction can also have a negative effect on children's natural speech; it can inhibit children from taking risks.

In the past, it was considered to be a disgrace to speak Patois or basilectal Creole-English in St. Lucian primary school classrooms. One of the strategies teachers used was to constantly correct children's speech in and outside of the classroom. A basilectal-Creole-English expression such as "Behave kou gason!" ("Behave yourself boy!") would be disdained by many teachers. In fact, I used to have some English-speaking children, like an army of soldiers, coming up to me with complaints. Their complaints would normally be "Teacher, this boy (pointing to the boy) speaking Patois in the class." If I responded by asking "What did he say?" they would all cover their mouths in shock when they heard such a question coming from me, "the teacher," as if they were saying

"Imagine the teacher is telling us to repeat those terrible words!" It was an "uncovering" for me, then, when I first heard Peter use that same expression ("Behave kou gason!") in the classroom without being corrected by Ms. Joseph. On the whole, when students spoke basilectal-Creole-English in the classroom she allowed them to talk freely.

However, I was surprised when Ms. Joseph decided to correct Peter's expression during a lesson, which greatly affected his train of thought. She often did this to the other students in the classroom, but she corrected the students only when she was actually teaching. This situation explains what Ms. Joseph meant when she said that she allowed the students to speak their native language in class. Could it be that the traditional school and culture in general in St. Lucia still had an influence on her ability to fully embrace the idea of cultural diversity in the classroom? Kempe (2001) points out that it is not likely for change to occur when it challenges existing power structures. The teacher must understand and be able to justify reasons for changing from one philosophical stance to another. In fact, as stated in the literature review, "Today, postcolonial struggles for autonomy, real independence and self-determination have to contend with a complex adversary whose power is dispersed through a wide range of globalized institutions and practices" (Young, 2001, p. 59). Similarly, Johnston (1996) makes the point that there are certain teachers—teachers for whom a literary curriculum is a static notion—will resist any notion of change.

At home, Peter, James, and John were not exposed to Standard English or approximations thereof. This means that they needed much practice in using the language orally and, importantly, to develop a concept of register. In this regard, Delpit (2002) posits that children need to learn that there are many ways of saying the same thing, and that certain contexts suggest particular kinds of linguistic performances. What this knowledge can do for a nonstandard English student is that it can show the student that his/her language also has a rightful place on the linguistic landscape, thereby increasing his/her self-esteem. A high self-esteem can increase students' academic achievement. At worse, a low self-esteem can be irreparable.

The literature on classroom diversity presents a large stock of approaches and opportunities that teachers can provide in the classroom to help bidialectal learners to become proficient in using Standard English. Those activities allow students to use language in authentic and culturally relevant ways. Nero (2000) has advanced a number of approaches. For example, teachers can have students use dialogue writing and role playing using both the home language and Standard English as a way of teaching language variation in different social contexts (register). Delpit (2002) also posits that teachers can involve students in various kinds of role-play. In Ms. Joseph's class, the students had opportunities to talk in English only during direct instruction. They did not have opportunities to be actively involved in real-life experiences that would encourage them to take risks in oral English language learning and, thereby enjoy it and become more successful in using it. Furthermore, from my observations, Peter, James, and John had a great capacity for learning. However, they knew that they were not represented in the classroom; they saw education going ahead without them, ignoring them, and they (especially, James and John) resisted this. As educators, we have to recognize that "being a student of diverse background does not necessarily imply difficulty in acquiring literacy" (Teale & Yokota, 2000, p. 17). Educators have to recognize the richness of students' culture that they bring into the classroom and build on it. Therefore, "the challenge is to find out how to eliminate the roadblocks that currently exist" (Teale & Yokota, 2000, p. 17) in the students' learning environment.

The Role of Socio-Political Consciousness in the Classroom

Ladson-Billings' (2002) third proposition—"Successful teaching promotes students' socio-political consciousness" (p. 111)—forms the basis for this discussion. Here, I focus specifically on the teaching approaches and learning opportunities Ms. Joseph provided in the classroom to help promote the three students' *socio-political consciousness*. Socio-political consciousness is an attempt to help students develop a sense of respect for one another, and to learn to ask larger socio-political questions about how schools and the society work to create on-going inequity and social injustice (Ladson-Billings, 2002). There are currently many issues (oppression, conflict, peer pressure, inequality, social injustice, starvation) that surround us as we learn and work today. In addition, we have long passed the stage of accepting a basic definition of literacy that includes only 'functional literacy.' "Literacy is more than a conglomeration of reading and writing skills: It also encompasses attitudes, behaviors, and symbolic meanings of what it is for an individual to be literate" (Horner, 2001, p. 99). The aims of education in the 21st century must transcend that which keeps one from "seeing" and taking control over his/her life trajectories. It is incumbent upon teachers to educate students (of all grades) so that they can be empowered with a critical mind to face the challenges that will confront them from schools and the wider society. The aim is that students will be able to make rational decisions to solve their problems.

This approach to teaching would certainly have been beneficial to all the students in Ms. Joseph's classroom, especially to James, who had frequently stayed away from school in the former grade to be in the company of a group of delinquent boys who were much older than him. Such an approach to education has the potential to change students' attitudes. Open discussion or critical engagement in regard to stories or pictures can promote critical consciousness, but the lack of reading materials in Ms. Joseph's classroom did not allow for this kind of engagement. The language and literacy approaches and learning opportunities Ms. Joseph provided in the classroom did reveal a shift away from the traditional approach to the teaching of language and literacy in St. Lucian primary schools. However the learning opportunities available to Peter, James, and John did not help them develop as readers, writers, and speakers of the St. Lucian expected English language.

Students' Interests, Attitudes, and Self-Concepts in Learning English Language and Literacy

The language and literacy learning environment of formal schooling seems to have had a negative effect on Peter, James, and John's attitudes toward and interests in English language and literacy learning. James and John were among the majority of students in the class who displayed a negative attitude toward and a lack of interest in learning language and literacy. More often than not, when Ms. Joseph was teaching, many of the students, including James and John, displayed signs of disengagement, frustration, and agitation. This usually occurred about half way into the second stage of Ms. Joseph's approach (direct instruction stage). For example, they talked when the teacher was talking, and swung their swivel plastic chairs to the limit. They did not watch what Ms. Joseph was teaching them from the blackboard. John would leave the classroom without Ms. Joseph's permission. He would crawl on the floor and, sometimes, get into a fight. Generally, a "pedagogy of poverty," as Haberman (1991) puts it, that does not meet students' needs will effect a poor social-emotional learning environment. Haberman describes a "pedagogy of poverty" as transmitting information, assigning worksheets, asking factual, low-level questions, reviewing worksheets, giving tests, reviewing tests, giving homework, reviewing homework, and giving grades. In contrast, effective teaching occurs, according to Haberman (1991), when teaching is wholesome and puts students at the center of learning, for example, when they are actively involved in real-life experiences in the classroom. It could be that due to lack of resources, professional support, facilities, time, and support for the 'special needs' students, teachers resort to such teaching because they have few options; they do what they can manage. This problem is systemic and perhaps stems from a lack of expectations for what constitutes quality primary education.

In turn, this poor physical, social-emotional learning climate seems to have had a negative impact on Ms. Joseph. It was difficult during those times for Ms. Joseph to maintain the students' interest in the lesson she was teaching. She showed signs of frustration, which indicated that she was aware that the environment was not supportive of the students' learning. Those were the moments when she used Creole French (Patois) to speak to the students who were misbehaving, for example, "Fifty seconds ja passé!" ("Fifty seconds have elapsed!"); "Las pa lé la!" ("Stop talking!"). This expression, in particular, was aimed at John when Ms. Joseph saw him making his exit without permission: "Aye misé-ah! co té ooh ca arlé?" ("Hey, mister! where are you going?"); "Ga dé verb la!" ("Look at the verb!"); "Ar sid bien!" ("Sit properly!"); and when they talked out of control, she exclaimed, "Tan yo!" ("Hear them!"). Ms. Joseph acknowledged that the students' were creating a tough time for her in the classroom:

> *Generally, in terms of their attitude, there are a lot of them that are really not very motivated. There are a lot of them that are ill-disciplined. They try to create a lot of problems while the teacher is teaching, and you have to try and settle them…and that is…sometimes very, very difficult.*

Pratt's (1990) idea on the affective aspects of the learning process provides further insight into the relationship between the classroom environment and the students' attitude and interest. The writer argues that "attitudes, motivation, and interests are as important as prior knowledge in determining how students will respond to a curriculum" (p. 94). This means that these factors influence how hard children will work at a reading or writing task. For example, children who are interested in a writing task presented to them will put forth much more effort in applying the language skills learned than will children who have no interest in the task. As a result, they will develop positive attitudes toward writing and, by the same token, expend more effort in the writing process than will children with negative attitudes. Although Peter was one of the poorest readers and writers, he was very interested in learning whatever skill Ms. Joseph had presented him with, and with that high level of interest he usually took risks. Yes, there were bad moments for him in the classroom—those moments when he would blame his peers for something (for which they probably were not accountable) when he seemed to have become frustrated from trying his best to be successful at his work—but, generally, he was a very motivated learner. On the other hand, John, whose literacy abilities were even poorer than Peter's, was not interested in the materials Ms. Joseph presented to him and, therefore, paid no heed to the lessons. James was much like John.

This finding further points to the notion of "individual differences." Although the three students were all basilectal-Creole-English speakers, they were different in many respects. While Peter capitalized on that one-time opportunity to sing, which Ms. Joseph gave the class, James and John showed that they were not interested. In fact, James expressed that he did not like to sing and John showed that he liked to play instead; they never joined the 'nightingales'. Further, in regard to their self-concept as Standard English language and literacy learners, Peter identified himself as a positive speaker, reader, and writer. This view of himself had to be a powerful motivator. James viewed himself as a good speaker but not as a good reader and writer. Unfortunately for John, he saw nothing good in himself.

These research findings likely account for the major difficulties that affect the performances of both St. Lucian primary school teachers and nonstandard-speaking students in language and literacy classrooms. I now present my recommendations, which I believe can help St. Lucian primary school teachers and basilectal-Creole-English learners experience greater success in the language and literacy classroom learning environment.

Recommendations for Classroom Practices

The following are the recommendations suggested for St. Lucian primary school classroom practices.

1. St. Lucian curriculum planners/government officials need to play a more active role in providing the necessary resources to support the work of teachers. They need to provide resources to create supportive environments—both physical and social-emotional—that facilitate students' learning and promote positive attitudes, high self-esteem, and increase their interests in learning. This is absolutely necessary as it can significantly affect teacher performance as well as students' language and literacy development. The classroom should be filled with print and well-organized displays and shelves. There should be a range of learning centers, and students should have easy access to a large variety of books and other learning materials. There should be space for students to work, and a variety of work areas that are both flexible and moveable. Permanent desk and chair fixtures such as those in Ms. Joseph's classroom make it difficult for teachers to be flexible in organizing their classrooms to accommodate learning activities. An appeal is made to the St. Lucian Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports to install modern furniture in primary school classrooms to facilitate teaching and learning.
2. The various ways a teacher organizes students and their experiences should allow for varied activities or differentiated instruction. Teachers need to incorporate both whole-class and small group activities. There should be the direct teaching of skills and strategies needed by the students, as well as book sharing, exchanging ideas, and conducting critical reading. Students with similar interests or abilities can be grouped together to practice problem solving, promoting critical thinking about issues that confront them, and helping them to make rational decisions to

solve problems. There should be individual activities that provide lots of time for students to apply comprehension strategies as they read independently, work at their own pace, discover and make meanings of things in the environment, and build knowledge, understanding, and skills independently. The students also need their own quiet space to reflect on their attitudes and learning. Each of these activities is essential in providing success in the language and literacy classroom.

3. There is need for primary school teachers to rally support to build libraries in their classrooms. Classroom libraries are essential because they complement and extend students' reading and learning, and at the same time they support and extend the lessons teachers are teaching. A well-stocked classroom library (containing at least seven books per student) reflects the heart of a balanced literacy classroom. Teachers can use the following strategies to provide their classrooms with reading materials: ask various bookstores and parent organizations in Castries and other places in St. Lucia for funding and to donate books to their students, hold garage sales to purchase books, visit second-hand bookstores, hold a paperback book exchange among students, join book clubs, attend library book sales, and periodically exchange sets of books with colleagues. Also, the Ministry of Education can play a greater role in encouraging the construction of classroom libraries in primary schools.
4. A call is made for professional development for teachers in St Lucia so they can learn broader and more contemporary understandings of literacy and of the role of culture in literacy development. This would enable teachers, school principals, curriculum developers, and officials from the Ministry of Education to work

together to understand the meanings and implications of "culturally relevant pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings, 2002) for their own contexts. Such professional development opportunities could be provided by the Ministry of Education and by the Division of Teacher Education at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. Such a teaching model is applicable to all St. Lucian primary school classrooms in which basilectal-Creole-English students learn language and literacy. A culturally relevant pedagogy would make it possible to link cultural activities including art, music, and community celebrations to the language and literacy curriculum. Further, it is a teaching model that encourages teachers to become responsive practitioners and, thereby embrace diversity as an aspect of responsive teaching. All in all, responsive teachers adopt a social constructivist perspective, have high expectations of students, and are learner centered.

5. There is need for the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia to make culturally relevant pedagogy an integral part of the language arts program offered to in-service teachers in the Language Department. The study of language diversity has not been a part of the language arts program. In-service teachers, then, would be equipped with theoretical and practical skills and strategies relating to culturally relevant pedagogy, which they can take back to their respective schools.
6. There is need for a literacy intervention program for students such as Peter, James, and John. The aim is to help students who are at risk of school failure to stay level with their same age peers, and thereby make every student a reader and writer by

the end of the primary grades. Such a program may require total school reorganization to provide excellent instruction throughout the primary grades.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. There is need for more research into how St. Lucian basilectal-Creole-English-speaking children and their families experience schooling. As stated earlier on, Morrow and Paratore (1993) argue that "if we do not attend to the home when we discuss literacy [and language] development, whatever strategies we carry out in school will never be completely successful" (p. 194). Researchers therefore need to explore how students and their families view schools and the school curriculum, the demands schools place on families, and the relevance and impact of formal English language schooling on the lives of basilectal-Creole-English-speaking students.
2. I recommend further research into the area of assessment. Classroom instruction should not be conducted in isolation; it needs to go hand-in-hand with assessment as they reinforce and inform each other. Like the area of instruction, which is broad in scope, assessment covers a wide spectrum of aspects that can inform instruction. Therefore, there is need for more research in the area of assessment in St. Lucian schools. There are a number of questions the researcher can ask. I recommend this crucial research question: "How do teachers identify Creole-speaking students who are experiencing language and literacy difficulty in the classroom so as to effectively address their needs and strengths?" The answers to this question lie in the area of assessment.

3. Based on the school's special education program which did not provide adequate support for Peter, James, and John, I think there is more research required in the area of early literacy intervention in order to provide adequate and effective services to and support for all the students who are 'at-risk.' According to Barone et al. (2005), "The conception of early intervention is grounded in the construct of *at-riskness* [italics added]" (p. 197). Within St. Lucian primary school context, at-risk students are primarily those whose language, family structures, values, and communities, are not congruent with those of the dominant St. Lucian class structure that schools were designed to support. Barone et al. (2005) articulate that blaming students and applying negative labels to them have decreased significantly. Rather, there has been a more introspective examination of how to characterize who is at risk—and more importantly, of how to help those students designated as at-risk to experience success in school. This idea resonates with the research question I recommended earlier on under the area of *assessment*.
4. There is need for further research on the role of school and classroom libraries within the St. Lucian primary school system. On this subject of libraries, Cunningham and Allington (2003) write: "Perhaps it is not surprising that schools with large numbers of poor children often have wholly inadequate school libraries and nonexistent classroom libraries. We must provide all children with access to books" (p. 260). The authors go on to say that these poor schools serve the very children who are least likely to live in literate home environments and least likely to have access to public library facilities. These are the schools that should have

(and must strive to have) the very best school libraries with the largest selection of picture books, narrative texts, informational texts, and multicultural literature.

Summary

This study has truly been a journey for me into a St. Lucian primary school classroom. As a teacher, researcher, and curriculum maker, I started this journey by pondering the large number of St. Lucian primary school children who were struggling to learn to read, write, and speak St. Lucian expected English and the outcomes for many of those students when they left school. The situation had always painted a dismal picture to me—one that I did not quite understand and wanted to improve. So, I looked to research in order to address those concerns. I focused on teacher/classroom instruction as the case/the unit of analysis. Hence, I conducted this qualitative case study from the theoretical perspectives of constructivism, social constructivism, and postcolonialism. I specifically addressed the research question that allowed me to inquire into the teaching approaches and learning opportunities/experiences Ms. Joseph provided for Peter, James, and John in the classroom to help them become proficient users of the oral and written forms of the St. Lucian expected/Standard English language.

This study revealed a number of findings. First of all, the classroom environment is a strong predictor of student success in language and literacy learning. Unfortunately, Ms. Joseph encountered many challenges in providing an environment that was conducive to English language learning. It appeared that the St. Lucian Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports did not fully embrace the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy as there was not enough clarity on the subject to guide teachers like Ms. Joseph. In addition, the Ministry of Education did not provide in-service or professional development opportunities for the teachers of primary schools, which could help clarify the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. Although there was a promising shift in Ms. Joseph's approach to the teaching of language and literacy away from the transmission model of teaching and learning, which has characterized the St. Lucian education system as a traditional school system, Ms. Joseph's approach to teaching the three focus students was limited. Nevertheless, the study revealed a number of ways in which Ms. Joseph might have circumvented those issues to make the language and literacy classroom a community of learners of St. Lucian expected English language.

Conclusion

This study has deepened my understanding of the difficulties teachers and basilectal-Creole-English learners face in St. Lucian primary school classrooms. My response to the research question is that Ms. Joseph was challenged in her attempts to provide adequate and high-quality teaching approaches and learning opportunities or experiences in the classroom for Peter, James, and John. As a result, they were not becoming proficient users of the oral and written forms of St. Lucian expected English.

Delpit (2002) states, "There is little evidence that speaking another mutually intelligible language form, per se, negatively affects one's ability to learn to read. But children who speak Ebonics [and also basilectal-Creole English] do have a more difficult time becoming proficient readers" (p. 126). Delpit (2002) explains: "In part, appropriate instructional methodologies are frequently not adopted" (p. 126). I have presented a number of recommendations which I hope will find favour with St. Lucian teachers, principals, and officials from the Ministry of Education. I am hoping that they will adopt the instructional methodologies I have put forward to help students who depend greatly upon their teachers to help make a difference in their lives. Truly, all children need the highest-quality literacy and language instruction to learn how to read, write, and speak (Cooper & Kiger, 2005).

REFERENCES

Allington, R. L. (1998). *Teaching struggling readers*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Allington, R. L. (2002). What I've learned about effective reading instruction: From a decade of studying exemplary elementary classroom teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *6*, 740-747.

Au, K. H. (2000). Literacy instruction for young children of diverse backgrounds. In D. S. Strickland & L. M. Morrow (Eds.), *Beginning reading and writing* (pp. 35-45). New York: Teachers College Press.

Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: A journey of a teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Barone, D. M., Mallette, M. H., & Xu, S. H. (2005). *Teaching early literacy: Development, assessment, and instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Best, J. W., & Kahn, J. V. (2006). *Research in education*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Boostrom, R. (1994). Learning to pay attention. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *7*(1), 51-64.

Bowie, R. L., & Bond, C. L. (1994). Influencing teachers' attitudes toward Black English: Are we making a difference? *Journal of Teacher Education*, *45*, 112-118.

Browne, A. (2003). Ann Browne's observations, suggestions and theoretical perspectives. In K. Hall (Ed.), *Listening to Stephen read: Multiple perspectives on literacy* (pp. 20-28). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Burns, P. C., Roe, B. D., & Ross, E. P. (1999). *Teaching reading in today's elementary schools*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Bush, B. (1998). 'Lost daughters of Afrik'? : Caribbean women, identity and cultural struggles from slavery to freedom. In M. N. Fhlathúin (Ed.), *The legacy of colonialism: Gender and cultural identity in postcolonial societies* (pp. 17-39). Dublin: Galway University Press.

Bush, B. (2006). *Imperialism and postcolonialism*. London: Pearson.

Carrington, L. D. (1990). The instrumentalization of St. Lucian. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *85*, 71-80.

Clay, M. M. (1985). *The early detection of reading difficulties*. Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann Education.

Clay, M. M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (1993). *Reading recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Coelho, E. (1991). *Caribbean students in Canadian schools, Book II*. Toronto: Pippin.

Cooper, J. D., & Kiger, N. D. (2005). *Literacy assessment: Helping teachers plan instruction*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Craig, D. R. (1983). Teaching standard English to non-standard speakers: Some methodological implications. *Journal of Negro Education*, *52*(1), 65-74.

Craig, D. R. (1999). *Teaching language and literacy: Policies and procedures for vernacular situations*. Georgetown: Education and Development Services.

Creighton, D. C. (1997). Critical literacy in the elementary classroom. *Language Arts*, *74*(6), 438-445.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crystal, D. (1995). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cunningham, P., & Allington, R. L. (2003). *Classrooms that work: They can all read and write*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2001). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Postmodern perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Delpit, L. (1995). Language diversity and learning. In L. Delpit (Ed.), *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom* (pp. 48-69). NY: The New Press.

Delpit, L. (2002). What should teachers do? Ebonics and culturally responsive instruction. In B. M. Power & R. S. Hubbard (Eds.), *Language development: A reader for teachers* (pp.124-128). NJ: Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.

Diller, D. (1999). Opening the dialogue: Using culture as a tool in teaching young African American children. *The Reading Teacher*, *52*(8), 820-833.

Doll, R. C. (1996). *Curriculum improvement: Decision making and process*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Ellis, J. (1997, November). *Workshop on qualitative research*. Paper presented at the workshop on qualitative research, Kingston, Jamaica.

Ellis, J. (1998). *Teaching from understanding: Teacher as interpretive inquirer*. New York: Garland.

Ellis, J. (2006). Researching children's experience hermeneutically and holistically. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *52*(3), 111-126.

Farris, P. J., Fuhler, C. J., & Walther, M. P. (2004). *Teaching reading: A balanced approach for today's classrooms*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Fevrier, C. J. (2004). *Using reading needs assessment as a basis for planning and implementing a reading programme for an eight-year-old in St. Lucia.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago.

Flippo, R. F. (2003). *Assessing readers: Qualitative diagnosis and instruction.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Frank, D. B. (1993). Political, religious, and economic factors affecting language choice in St. Lucia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *102*, 39-56.

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1990). Literacies programs: Debates and demands in cultural context. *Prospect: Australian Journal of ESL*, *5*(3), 7-16.

Fromkin, V., & Rodman, R. (1993). *An introduction to language*. Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College.

Gachet, C. (1975). *A history of the Roman Catholic Church in St. Lucia*. Port of Spain: Key Caribbean.

Gandhi, L. (1999). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Garrett, P. B. (2000). "High" Kweyol: The emergence of a formal Creole register in St. Lucia. In J. McWhorter (Ed.), *Language change and language contact in pidgins and creoles* (pp. 63-101). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Gay, [illegible] R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2006). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gee, J. P. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction. *Journal of Education*, *171*(1), 5-17.

Green, P. (2001). Critical literacy revisited. In H. Fehring & P. Green (Eds.), *Critical literacy: A collection of articles from Australian literacy educators' association* (pp. 7-14). IRA.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In E. G. Guba & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gunning, T. G. (2005). *Creating literacy: Introduction for all students*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Haberman, M. (1991). The pedagogy of poverty versus good teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *12*, 290-294.

Hall, K. (2003). Reading as a problem-solving activity. In K. Hall (Ed.), *Listening to Stephen read: Multiple perspectives on literacy* (pp. 36-51). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Harp, B., & Brewer, J. A. (2005). *The informed reading teacher: Research-based practice*. NJ: Prentice Hall.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heilman, A. W., Blair, T. R., & Rupley, W. H. (1998). *Principles and practices of teaching reading*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Henniger, M. L. (2004). *The teaching experience: An introduction to reflective practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Hilliard, A. G. (2002). Language, culture, and the assessment of African American children. In L. Delpit & J. K. Dowdy (Eds.), *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 87-105). New York: The New York Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Horner, S. L. (2001). Literacy in the African diaspora: Black Caribbean American communities. In J. L. Harris, A. G. Kamhi, & K. E. Pollock (Eds.), *Literacy in*

African American communities (pp. 99-107). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Huber, J., Murphy, S., & Clandinin, D. J. (2003). Creating communities of cultural imagination: Negotiating a curriculum of diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *33*(4), 343-362.

Isaac, M. F. (1986). *French Creole interference in the written English of St. Lucian secondary school students*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill campus, Barbados.

Johnston, I. (1996). *Re-mapping literary worlds: Postcolonial pedagogy in practice*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Canada.

Jordan, N. L. (2005). Basal readers and reading as socialization: What are children learning? *Language Arts*, *82*(3), 204-213.

Juel, C. (1988). Learning to read and write: A longitudinal study of 54 children from first through fourth grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *80*(4), 437-447.

Kempe, A. (2001). No single meaning: Empowering students to construct socially critical readings of the text. In H. Fehring & P. Green (Eds.), *Critical literacy: A collection of articles from the Australian literacy educators' association* (pp. 40-57). IRA.

Kristeva, J. (1991). *Strangers to ourselves* (Translated by Leon S. Roudiez). New York: Columbia University Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1992). Liberatory consequences of literacy: A case of culturally relevant instruction for African American students. *Journal of Negro Education*, *61*(3), 378-391.

Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. J. (2002). I ain't writin' nuttin': Permissions to fail and demands to succeed in urban classrooms. In L. Delpit & J. K. Dowdy (Eds.), *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 107-120). New York: The New Press.

Lapp, D., & Flood, J. (1997). Where's the phonics? Making the case (again) for integrated code instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, *50*, 696-700.

Lapp, D., Fisher, D., Flood, J., & Cabello, A. (2001). An integrated approach to the teaching and assessment of language arts. In S. R. Hurley & J. V. Tinajero (Eds.), *Literacy assessment of second language learners* (pp. 1-26). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Lenski, S. D., & Nierstheimer, S. L. (2004). *Becoming a teacher of reading: A developmental approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Le Page, R. B., & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loban, W. (1976). *Language development: Kindergarten through grade twelve*. Urbana, IL: National Council of teachers of English.

Luke, A. (1993). Stories of social regulation: The micropolitics of classroom narrative. In B. Green (Ed.), *The insistence of the letter: Literacy studies and curriculum theorizing* (pp. 137-153). London: Falmer Press.

Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1999). *Further notes on the resources model*. Retrieved June 21, 2005 from: http://www.alea.edu.au/freebody.htm

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Midgett, D. (1970). Bilingualism and linguistic change in St. Lucia. *Anthropological Linguistics*, *7*, 158-170.

Millar, H. (1995, September 15). A mind is a terrible thing to waste [Letter to the editor]. *The Mirror Newspaper*, p. 13.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview-narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct* (pp. 233-255). New York: Praeger.

Morrow, L. M., & Weinstein, C. (1982). Increasing children's use of literature through program and physical changes. *Elementary School Journal*, *83*, 131-137.

Morrow, L. M., & Paratore, J. (1993). Family literacy: Perspective and practices. *The Reading Teacher*, *47*(3), 194-200.

Nawrot, K. (1998). Joanna learns to read. In J. L. Ellis (Eds.), *Teaching from understanding* (pp. 97-110). New York: Garland.

Nero, S. J. (1997a). English is my native language…or so I believe. *TESOL Quarterly*, *31*, 585-593.

Nero, S. J. (1997b). ESL or ESD? Teaching English to Caribbean English speakers. *TESOL Journal*, *7*, 6-10.

Nero, S. J. (2000). The changing faces of English: A Caribbean perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, *34*(3), 483-510.

Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1993). *The common curriculum: Grades 1-9*. Ontario: Author.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pearson, P. D. (1998). Standards and assessments: Tools for crafting effective instruction? In J. Osborn & F. Lehr (Eds.), *Literacy for all: Issues in teaching and learning* (pp. 264-288). NY: Guilford.

Phillips, D. C. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. *Educational Researcher*, *24*, 5-12.

Piaget, J. (1977). *Equilibration of cognitive structures*. New York: Viking.

Pollard, V. (1997). From periphery to centre: Teaching Caribbean literature within a post-colonial/Commonwealth context. In A. Collett, L. Jensen & A. Rutherford (Eds.), *Teaching post-colonialism: And post-colonial literatures* (pp. 166-173). Oxford: Aarhus University Press.

Pransky, K., & Bailey, F. (2003). To meet your students where they are, first you have to find them: Working with culturally and linguistically diverse at-risk students. *The Reading Teacher*, *56*(4), 370-383.

Pratt, D. (1990). *Curriculum planning: A handbook for professionals*. Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College.

Rhodes, L. K., & Shanklin, N. (1993). *Windows into literacy: Assessing learners k-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Roberts, P. A. (1988). *West Indian and their language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, R. M. (1982). Hermeneutics, general studies, and teaching. *Selected Papers from the Synergos Seminars*, Volume 2: Hermeneutics, general studies, and teaching, 1-15.

Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Shepard, L. A. (2000). The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational Researcher*, *29*, 4-14.

Siegel, J. (1999). Stigmatized and standardized varieties in the classroom: Interference or separation? *TESOL Quarterly*, *33*, 701-728.

Simmons-McDonald, H. (1988). *The learning of English negatives by speakers of St. Lucian French creole*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, Stanford.

Simmons-McDonald, H. (2002). The effects of vernacular instruction on the development of bi-literacy abilities of native speakers of French creole. Retrieved June 11, 2005 from: http://www.hawaii.edu/spc103/pace/13-conferences.htm

Slavin, R. E., Madden, N. A., Dolan, L. J., Wasik, B. A., Ross, S., Smith, L., et al. (1996). Success for all: A summary of research. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, *1*(1), 41-76.

Slemon, S. (2001). Post-colonial critical theories. In G. Castle (Ed.), *Postcolonial discourses: An anthology* (pp. 99-116). Oxford: Blackwell.

Spiegel, D. L. (1999). The perspective of the balanced approach. In S. M. Blair-Larsen & K. A. Williams (Eds.), *The balanced reading program* (pp. 8-23). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2001). Preserving our professional heritage: A call for oral history projects. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, *28*(2), 40-45.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

St. Lucia Educational Evaluation and Examination Unit. (1998). *Standard 11 minimum standards test report*. Castries: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports.

St. Lucia Educational Evaluation and Examination Unit. (1999). *Report on candidates' performance in the 1999 local examinations: Common entrance, common middle and standard six school leaving certificate*. Castries: Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports.

St. Lucia National Language Arts Curriculum for Primary Schools. (1999). *Curriculum guide for language arts*. Castries: CAMDU.

St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports. (2000). *Education sector development plan 2000-2005 and beyond*. Castries: Author.

12

St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports. (2000). *Caribbean language arts project grade 3 reader: Reading and writing everyday*. Caribbean: Macmillan.

St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports. (2005). *Caribbean language arts project grade 3: Workbook*. Caribbean: Macmillan.

St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports. (2005). *Caribbean language arts project grade 3: Activity book*. Caribbean: Macmillan.

Strickland, D. S. (2000). Beginning reading and writing. In D. S. Strickland & L. M. Morrow (Eds.), *Beginning reading and writing* (pp. 99-110). New York: Teachers College Press.

Tasmania Department of Education. (2004). Critical literacy. Retrieved June 21, 2005 from: http://www.education.tas.gov.au

Taylor, D., & Dorsey-Gaines, C. (1988). *Growing up literate: Learning from inner-city families*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Teale, W. H., & Yokota, J. (2000). Beginning reading and writing: Perspectives on instruction. In D. S. Strickland & L. M. Morrow (Eds.), *Beginning reading and writing* (pp. 3-21). New York: Teachers College Press.

Tellis, W. (1997). Application of a case study methodology. Retrieved June 1, 2004 from: http://www. nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-3/tellis2.html

Trudgill, P., & Hannah, J. (1985). *International English: A guide to varieties of standard English*. Great Britain: The Chaucer press.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London: The Althouse Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Wiggins, G. (1993). *Assessing student performance: Exploring the purpose and limits of testing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Willis, A. I. (1997). Focus on research: Historical considerations. *Language Arts*, *74*(5), 387-387.

Winford, D. (1991). The Caribbean. In J. Cheshire (Ed.), *English around the world: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 565-584). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yokota, J. (1995). Literacy development for students of diverse populations. In S. B. Wepner, J. T. Feeley, & D. S. Strickland (Eds.), *The administration and supervision of reading programs* (pp. 65-79). New York: Teachers College Press.

Young, R. J. C. (2001). *Postcolonialism: An historical introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Checklists

Oral Language Observation Checklist

Student's Name: .... Researcher's Name: ....

Place a check beside each behaviour that the student exhibits.

Behaviours:	Date(s) & Comments:
1. Expresses ideas in English.	....
2. Expresses ideas in Creole English.	....
3. Collaborates in speaking and listening.	....
4. Participates in discussion without an adult asking him/her to do so.	....
5. Expresses himself/herself through various speech acts such as constructive conversations, discussions, reports.	....
6. Listens to and questions the speaker.	....
7. Uses new/uncommon vocabulary.	....
8. Enjoys listening to and telling stories/jokes/riddles.	....
9. Shows willingness to take risks.	....
10. Demonstrates an awareness of register/usage.	....
11. Uses story language during story retelling/book talk.	....
12. Demonstrates higher-level thinking skills.	....

Literacy Observation Checklist

Student's Name: .... Researcher's Name: ....

Place a check beside each behaviour that the student exhibits.

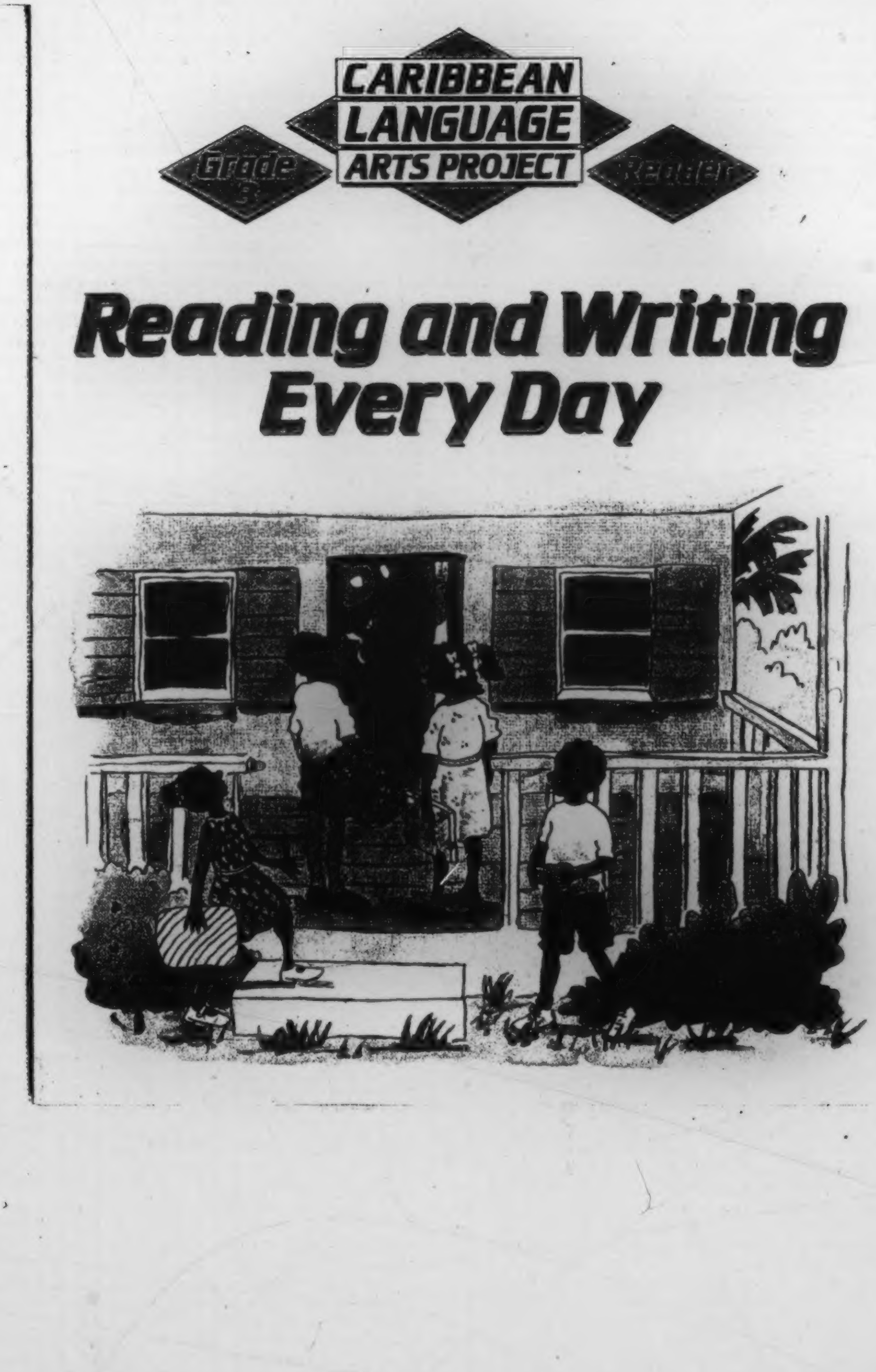
Behaviours: Date(s) & Comments:

1. Shows interest in reading and writing. ....
2. Reads and writes voluntarily. ....
3. Uses a variety of word recognition strategies. ....
4. Uses a variety of comprehension strategies. ....
5. Writes coherently. ....
6. Reads fluently. ....
7. Makes reasonable predictions. ....
8. Self-corrects errors during reading/writing. ....
9. Reads and writes independently. ....
10. Chooses books purposefully. ....
11. Shows confidence as a reader/writer. ....
12. Eagerly participates in book/text discussions, author studies, and other forms of responses to literature. ....
13. Understands the role of purpose in reading/writing. ....
14. Retells in detail and summarizes texts. ....
15. Knows how to use the library. ....
16. Shows willingness to take risks. ....

APPENDIX B

Extracts of St. Lucian Students' Third-Grade Textbooks

Third-Grade Reader (Book Cover)



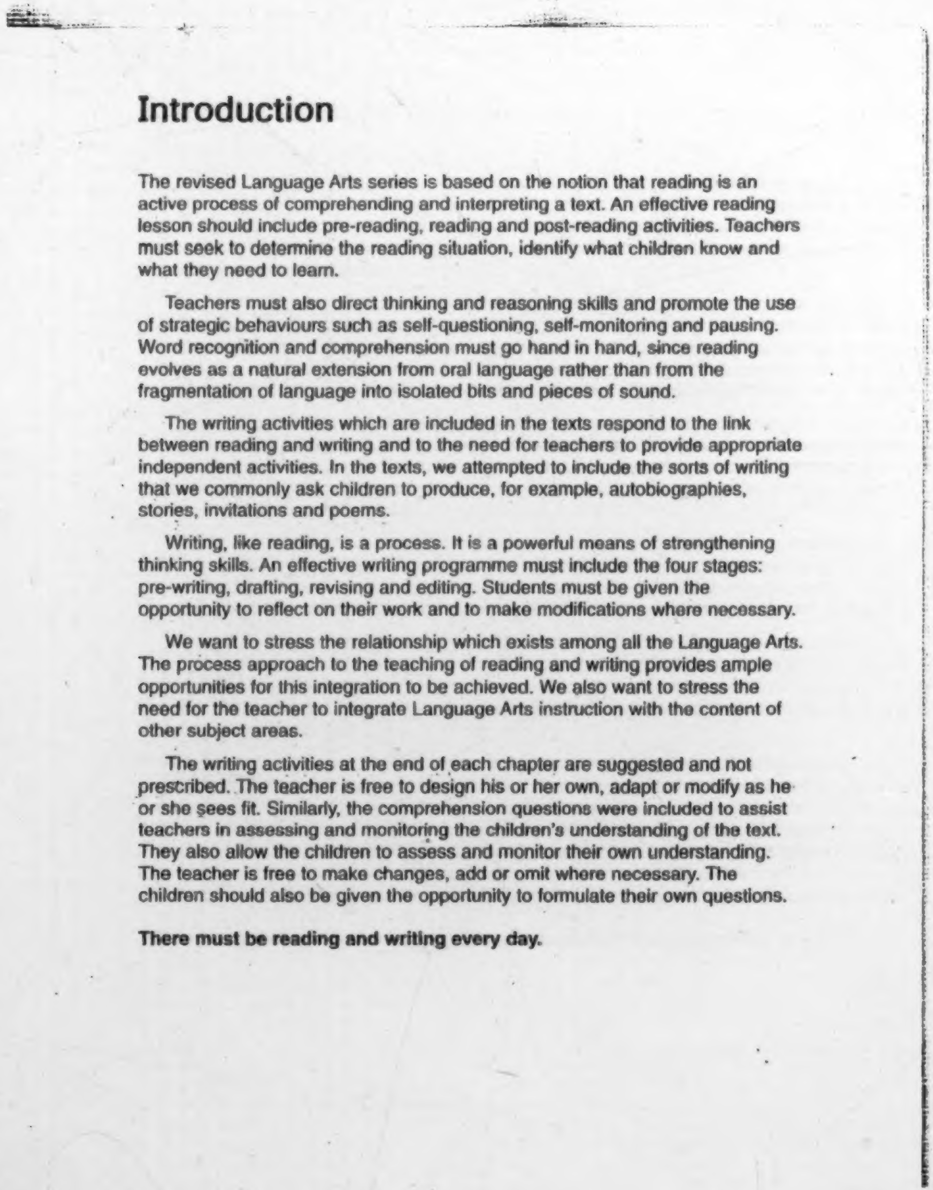
Grade 3

CARIBBEAN
LANGUAGE
ARTS PROJECT

Reader

Reading and Writing
Every Day

Introduction to Reader



Introduction

The revised Language Arts series is based on the notion that reading is an active process of comprehending and interpreting a text. An effective reading lesson should include pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities. Teachers must seek to determine the reading situation, identify what children know and what they need to learn.

Teachers must also direct thinking and reasoning skills and promote the use of strategic behaviours such as self-questioning, self-monitoring and pausing. Word recognition and comprehension must go hand in hand, since reading evolves as a natural extension from oral language rather than from the fragmentation of language into isolated bits and pieces of sound.

The writing activities which are included in the texts respond to the link between reading and writing and to the need for teachers to provide appropriate independent activities. In the texts, we attempted to include the sorts of writing that we commonly ask children to produce, for example, autobiographies, stories, invitations and poems.

Writing, like reading, is a process. It is a powerful means of strengthening thinking skills. An effective writing programme must include the four stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. Students must be given the opportunity to reflect on their work and to make modifications where necessary.

We want to stress the relationship which exists among all the Language Arts. The process approach to the teaching of reading and writing provides ample opportunities for this integration to be achieved. We also want to stress the need for the teacher to integrate Language Arts instruction with the content of other subject areas.

The writing activities at the end of each chapter are suggested and not prescribed. The teacher is free to design his or her own, adapt or modify as he or she sees fit. Similarly, the comprehension questions were included to assist teachers in assessing and monitoring the children's understanding of the text. They also allow the children to assess and monitor their own understanding. The teacher is free to make changes, add or omit where necessary. The children should also be given the opportunity to formulate their own questions.

There must be reading and writing every day.

I

Why the Rabbit's Lip is Split

*A **folktale** is a story which has been told over many many years. A large number of folktales have animals as characters. Do you know of any story with animal characters?*

Long, long ago, Rabbit lived on a lonely little island right in the middle of a wide river. He had no one to speak to and this made him very unhappy. There was not much he could get to eat because food was scarce on the island.

One day Rabbit said to himself, 'I will go to the bank of the river. I have seen many other rabbits there and besides, there is a lot of food to eat.'

But how would he reach the bank? He could not swim. He hopped up and down the edge of the river looking for a boat. But alas! He could not find any.

Just as he was about to give up, he saw an enormous head, with a pair of bright bulging eyes and a large mouth with razor-sharp teeth. It was an alligator's head.

'Hey!' thought Rabbit. 'If I ask Alligator to take me across the river, he might just gobble me up.' Rabbit started to think about a plan and then he had a brilliant idea.

'Good morning, Alligator. What a fine day it is!' greeted Rabbit, cheerfully.

'Good morning, Rabbit,' replied Alligator. 'It is, indeed, fine.' And as Alligator spoke, he came to the water's edge.

'How big you are!' exclaimed Rabbit.

'Ho! Ho! Ho!' roared Alligator, puffing his chest with pride. 'Very big.'

'In this case, there cannot be many of you, else you would fill up the entire river,' said Rabbit.

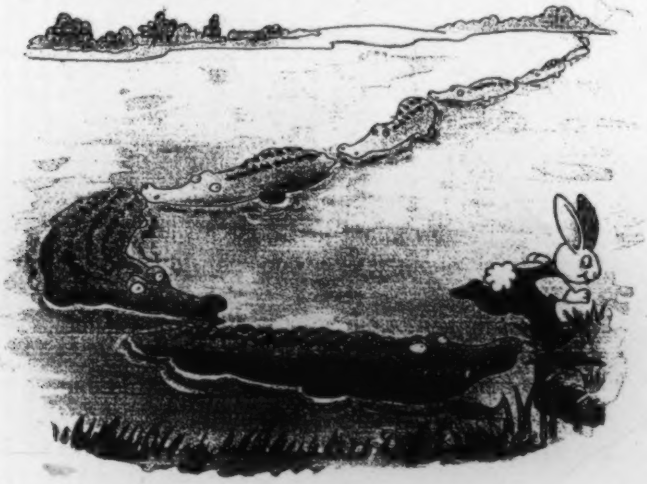
'As a matter of fact,' boasted Alligator, 'there are so many of us, it would take you all day to count us.'

'I am sure it would, but I would still like to try,' said the cunning rabbit. 'Call them all up!'

Alligator vanished in the water for a moment and reappeared with all the alligators that lived in the river.

Rabbit could not believe his eyes. He hopped up and down for joy. 'Lie down in a long line and I will hop on your backs and count you,' he said.

The alligators did as Rabbit told them. The line they made was so long it stretched right across the river. Rabbit jumped on the back of the first alligator, then on the next and the next. As he jumped, he counted, '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.' He jumped off the back of the last one and then on to the bank of the river.



'Thank you, kind alligators,' he said with a bow. 'It was nice of you to let me run along your backs. I simply wanted to get to land.' As he said this, he threw his head back and laughed. He laughed till his sides hurt and his upper lip stretched. The more he laughed, the more his lip stretched. It stretched and stretched until it split.

Comprehension

1 Who are the characters in the story?
2 Why did Rabbit want to go to the river bank?
3 How was he able to get there?
4 Did Alligator have any idea of what Rabbit wanted to do? How do you know?
5 How do you think Alligator felt when Rabbit reached the river bank?
6 Choose the word which best describes Alligator.
a) kind b) brilliant c) boastful
7 Which word best describes Rabbit?
a) lazy b) cunning c) mean
8 Why did Rabbit's lip split?
9 Which of the two characters would you rather be? Why?

Activities

1 Make up your own story in which one animal tricks another animal.
2 Dramatise the story.
3 Relate a story with animal characters to your class.

12

Compere Chat and Compere Chien Go Fishing

Have you ever wondered why dogs and cats do not get along well together? Discuss some reasons why you think that this is so. Here is a **folktale** *about Compere Chat and Compere Chien.*

Compere Chien and Compere Chat were neighbours. They were good friends. Compere Chat went fishing every day. He would leave early in the morning. He carried a pail in which he put his catch. Sometimes, he caught guppies, eels and crayfish. He would return home in the afternoon and have a delicious meal of fish with his family.

Compere Chien noticed that Compere Chat left his home each morning and returned in the afternoon. He became very curious.

'Compere Chat, where do you go every day?' Compere Chien asked.

'I go fishing,' replied Compere Chat.

'Really. Where?' Chien inquired.

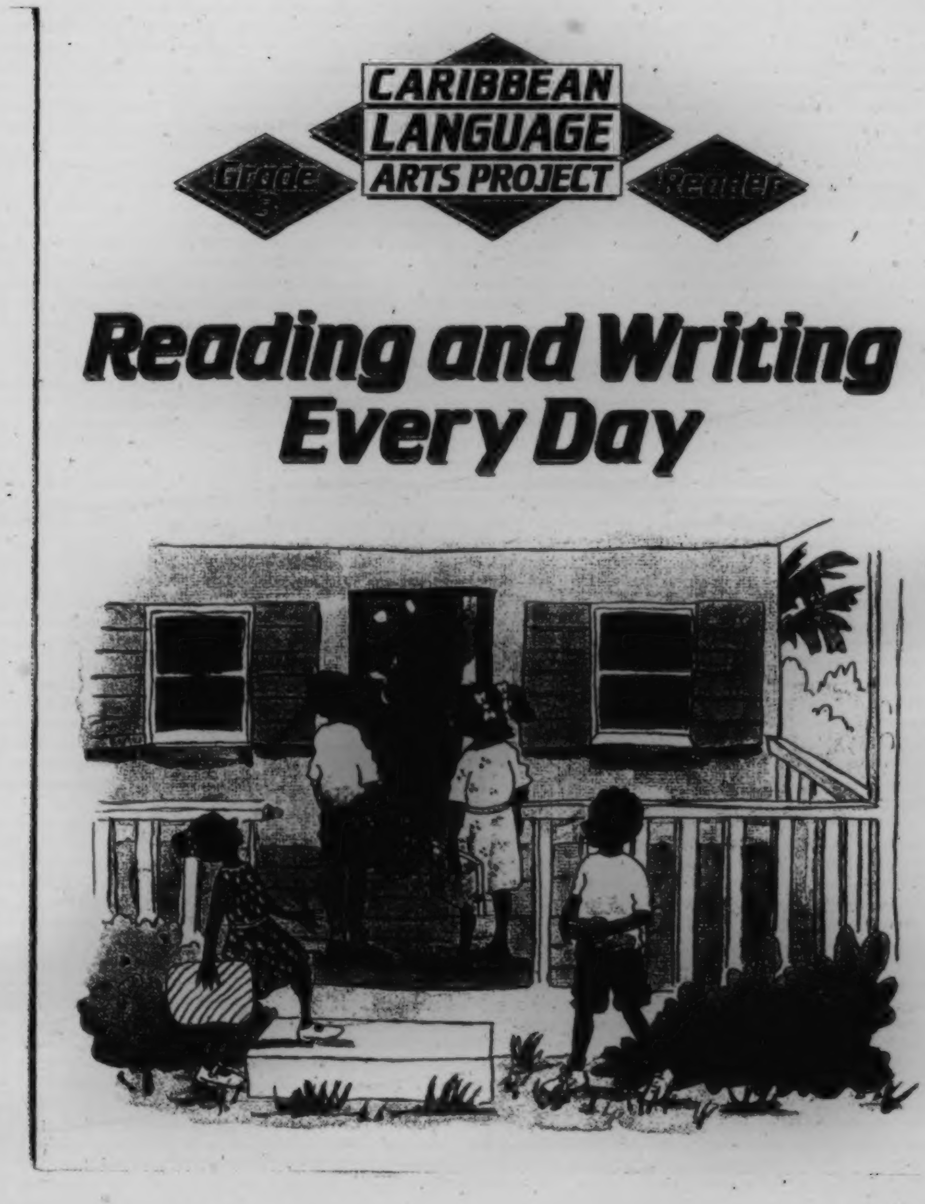
'Oh, just up the river,' the cat replied.

'Are the fish easy to catch?' Compere Chien asked.

'Oh, yes,' answered the cat. 'All you have to do is sit on the river bank, sing a little song and the fish will come to you. As soon as they appear, you must catch them in your pail.'

'It sounds very simple. What is the song?' asked the dog.

Activity Book (Cover)



CARIBBEAN
LANGUAGE
ARTS PROJECT

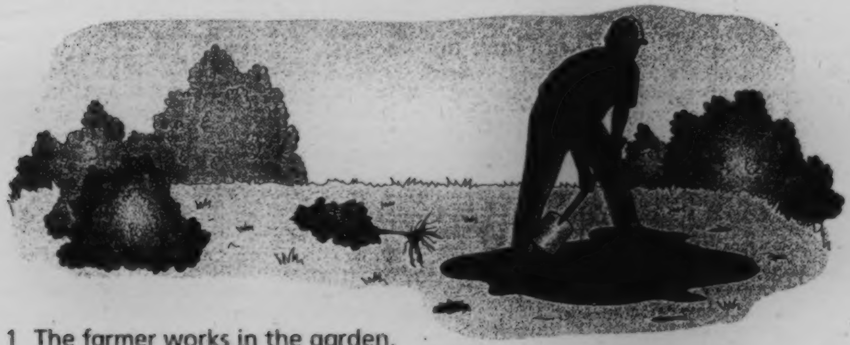
Grade 3

Reader

Reading and Writing
Every Day

Activity

The sentences below are written in the present tense. Rewrite each sentence in your exercise book in (a) the past tense and (b) the future tense. The first has been done for you.



1 The farmer works in the garden.
  (a) The farmer worked in the garden.
  (b) The farmer will work in the garden.

2 I open my presents.

3 The family walk together to the park.

4 The boys close the door after school.

5 Daddy drives his car to work each day.

6 Peter plays with his kite in the park.

7 The little girl skips in the yard every day.

8 Ann shops for her mother.

9 The washing dries on the line.

10 Andy runs with the ball.

11 The children are on the playing field.

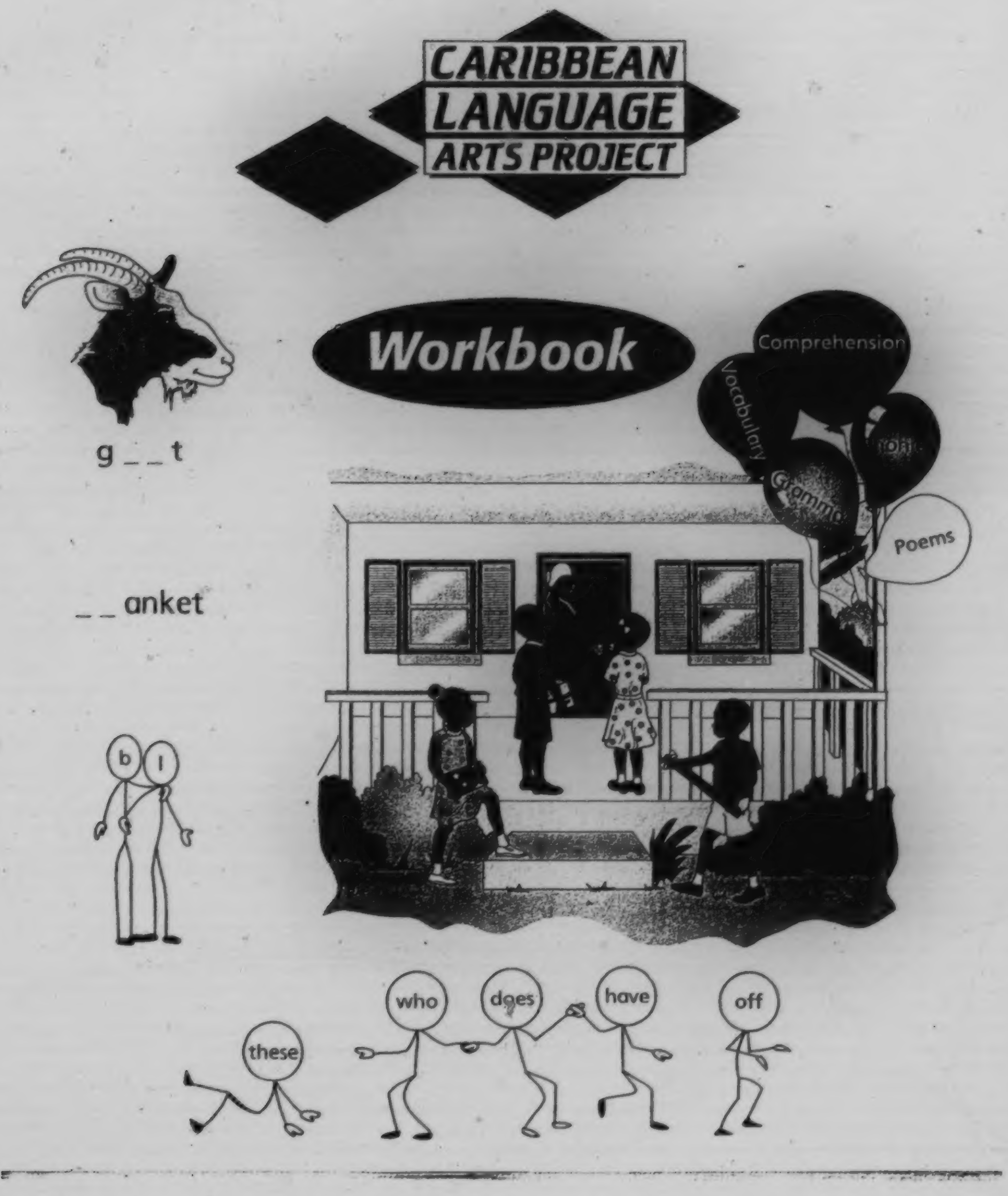
12 The teacher talks sternly to the latecomers.

13 The class finds out about rivers in St Lucia.

14 The doctor gives her some medicine for her stomach.

Objective: Rewriting sentences using different tenses.

Workbook (Cover)


CARIBBEAN
LANGUAGE
ARTS PROJECT
Workbook
g _ _ t
_ _ anket
b
l
Comprehension
Vocabulary
Gramma
Poems
these
who
does
have
off

Activity

These are the names of people. Arrange them in alphabetical order. The first has been done for you.

Smith
Helen
Cathy
Bruno
Ted
Ethel
Roger
Jonah
Lee
Frank
Kay
Walter
Don
Peter
Marie
Grace

1 Bruno 2 ______ 3 ______ 4 ______

5 ______ 6 ______ 7 ______ 8 ______

9 ______ 10 ______ 11 ______ 12 ______

13 ______ 14 ______ 15 ______ 16 ______

These are the names of districts in St Lucia. Arrange the names in alphabetical order. Also write the correct numbers on the map.

Gros Islet
Dennery
Castries
Anse la Raye
Micoud
Dauphin
Vieux Fort
Soufriere
Praslin
Choiseul
Laborie

1 ______ 2 ______

3 ______ 4 ______

5 ______ 6 ______

7 ______ 8 ______

9 ______ 10 ______

11 ______

Objectives: Putting names into alphabetical order, including use of second letters for sorting.
Identifying the position of districts in St Lucia.

APPENDIX C

Sample Lessons and Field Notes: Ms. Joseph's Language and Literacy Instruction

Sample Lessons and Field Notes Typical of the Language and Literacy Lessons in this Grade-Three Classroom

Monday, October 17, 2005

- *Preparation for the lesson:* It is now 10:45 a.m., and the students' fifteen minute recess period has just ended, so they quickly form a line to enter the classroom. Some of the students immediately take their seats while others are still standing, engaging in some talk or some other activity. Some of them are still excited and sweaty after having been on the playground, so Ms. Joseph settles them down quickly so she can start her lesson.
- *Materials:* Handout with passage entitled *Charlie the Dog*; worksheets
- *Introducing the lesson:* Ms. Joseph ensures that all the students are ready for the lesson. She writes on the blackboard: Language Arts—Long and Short Sound of letter *a*. Ms. Joseph introduces her lesson by singing a song ('A' is my name…; two sounds I make….).
- *Teaching the lesson:*

Step 1

Ms. Joseph writes on the blackboard:

Long Sound	Short Sound
cake	lamb

She asks the whole class: "What's a lamb?" (Only one child knows what a lamb is; Peter, James, and John have no idea).

Step 2

Ms. Joseph then helps students to see the difference between the sounds of the letter 'a', focusing on the ending sounds of the words to explain the reason for the long and short vowel sounds.

Step 3

Next, she asks the students to name words with the short sound of 'a'. Students come up with such words as 'apple', 'army', and 'at' (Peter's word). Then, she does the same for the long vowel sound. The students have had much practice with this exercise.

Step 4

Ms. Joseph gives each student a handout with a passage about *Charlie the Dog* (a hand-written story which she extracted from a text) and asks them to follow the story on their sheets while she reads it. Ms. Joseph reads the passage aloud then rereads it (students do not get a chance to read themselves). She then asks the students to underline the letter 'a' that makes the short sound and circle the one that makes the long sound in each word.

Step 5

Having done this exercise on the worksheet, Ms. Joseph now asks the students to write the words with the long sound of 'a' under the heading, 'Long Sound' and those with the short under the heading, 'Short Sound' in their notebooks. Ms. Joseph goes around and assists the students in doing the exercise. Peter's work looks like this (he seems confused as he writes):

Long Sound	Short Sound
Charlie	Charlie

and	whales
island	island
	scarce
	staring
	came

- *Concluding the lesson:* Ms. Joseph gets everyone's attention for evaluation of their work. She asks the class to indicate the heading under which each word should be written on the blackboard as she calls them out. She calls out each word and the students respond. Peter makes his contributions by echoing what his neighbours say. James and John, on the other hand, are not participating.

Tuesday, October 18, 2005

- *Preparation for the lesson:* Same as yesterday's lesson.
- *Materials:* Handout with passage entitled *Charlie the Dog*; notebooks
- *Introducing the lesson:* Ms. Joseph ensures that the students are all ready for the lesson. She writes, Language Arts—Reading Vocabulary, on the blackboard and informs them of what she wants them to learn about in this lesson: "OK, this morning, we will do some reading and some vocabulary; we will find the meanings of the new words in the same text we used yesterday about *Charlie the Dog*.
- *Teaching the lesson:*

Step 1

The whole class is asked to read the first sentence. Then, Ms. Joseph highlights important vocabulary. She focuses on the pronunciation of these words, 'mouth' and 'island'. She asks the students to read the second sentence, 'He was hungry and unhappy'. This time, she focuses on the meaning of the word 'unhappy' by asking the students questions, for example, "What is the meaning of unhappy?" Then, they read the third sentence (strangely, Peter is not participating in the reading; he is engaged in a struggle with his neighbour over a ruler) and Ms. Joseph focuses on the meaning of the word 'scarce'. In looking at the word 'entrance' in a sentence, Ms. Joseph relates the word to the students' everyday life. She says, "When you go shopping with your mother, you will see the word "entrance" written on the door, example, the 3$ store [which is a very popular store in Castries, the capital of St. Lucia]." She also explains the word in contrast with the word 'exit'. Ms. Joseph and the students follow the same procedure to complete the passage, that is, sentence by sentence and word by word for vocabulary development. Peter, James, and John are not able to read the sentences that Ms. Joseph is asking the class to read; they are depending on other students.

Step 2

Ms. Joseph asks the students a few literal comprehension questions about the passage read.

Step 3

Ms. Joseph writes the following exercise on the blackboard for the students to do in their notebooks:

Match the word in Column A to a word that means the same in Column B

Column A	Column B
1. unhappy	gigantic
2. huge	stare
3. look	sad
4. not enough	scarce
	afraid

Students read the exercise from the blackboard (with Ms. Joseph's assistance) before they begin to write in their notebooks. Ms. Joseph times the students as they write. James is slow but he is trying to do his work well; his first answer is correct but the second is wrong. Peter is struggling with his work and tries his best to copy his neighbour's work. While I am observing Peter doing his seatwork, I ask him to show me the word 'deeper' in the reading passage, he points to the word 'hear' for 'deeper'. I ask him to identify a few more and they are all wrong. John is not doing any work. He and a boy (his friend) are playing in the classroom as the teacher is assisting individual students.

- *Concluding the Lesson:* Ms. Joseph goes over the exercise for evaluation of the students' work.

Field notes—Monday, October 24, 2005

The bell has gone (10:45 a.m.). Students form line to enter class. They are still sweaty and excited after having been on playground for 15 mins. Teacher settles them down to start lesson.

The language arts lesson begins. Peter is wearing navy blue pants and a light blue shirt and is sitting between two children, a girl on his left hand side and a boy on his right, at the back of the class. The teacher writes the subject "Language Arts—Reading Skills" on the blackboard and draws the students' attention to it.

She then asks the children to get their reading books entitled Reading and Writing Everyday. They are to read chap. 24, pp. 76-77, titled The Fight (Teacher had asked them to read this text as homework.) Peter enthusiastically pulls out his reading book from his bag which is on the empty desk at the back of the class and gives me a quick glance. I'm sitting between the two rows of desks on a chair which the class teacher handed me when I entered the classroom, and I'm sitting approximately 6 ft. behind Peter and 3 ft. to his right. Teacher asks half of the class to read then the other half which includes Peter, and then the whole class. She asks the children whether they all know the 1st 3 words in the book. Everyone shouts "Yes Miss."

After whole class reading, teacher tells children that they read very well. However, I observed that Peter and some other children were not reading from their text; they were repeating whatever they heard from the few who were actually reading—their eyes were all over the place; no fixations as such.

The skill the teacher is now focusing on is the 'ea' sound as in 'beat', 'weak'. Words focused on are within a paragraph drawn from the same reading text which the children read. The paragraph is written on a chart posted on the blackboard. Teacher is helping children grasp the sound of the vowel *combination 'ea' by using the word 'bat' and identifying the 'a' sound in the word; 'a' says /a/. She then places 'e' in front of 'a' in the word 'bat' and draws students' attention to the new sound—that the /a/ sound changed to /e/. Teacher explains: "When the 'e' is added to 'a', the 'e' takes over the letter 'a'; it's in front."*

Teacher is now passing a plastic bag around for students to dip for a word with 'ea'—children are asked to use their knowledge of the 'ea' sound to find their own words. Students are given time to write their words in their exercise/note books.

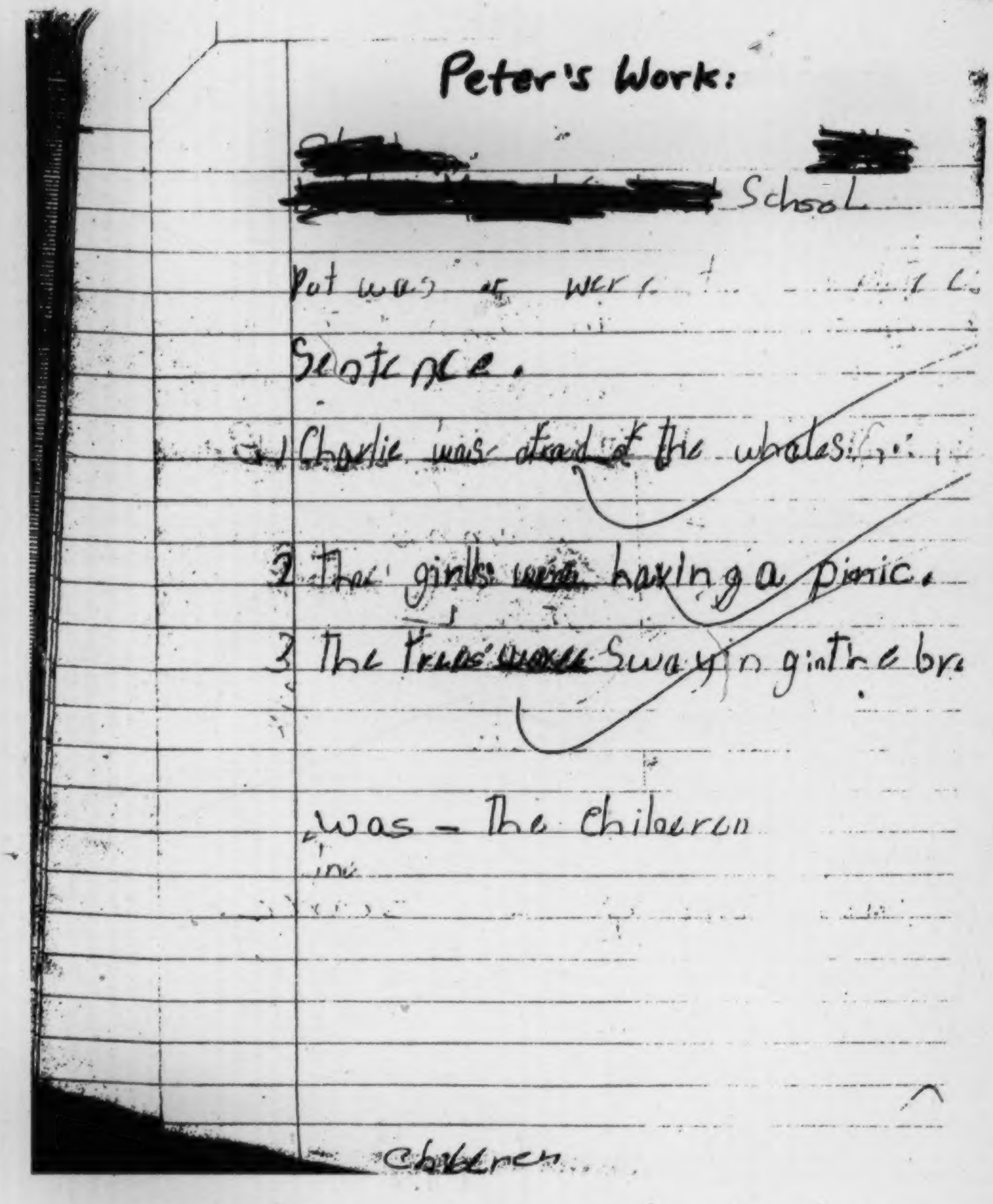
I'm trying to see what Peter is writing but he is covering his work with his left hand as he writes. A boy comes and interrupts Peter; he tells him something. Peter is not too concerned about what the boy is saying. Teacher asks the boy to go back to his seat.

It's now time for feedback. Some students come up with new words like 'beach', 'seal'. Peter seems helpless and copies the same words that are on the chart.

Lesson ends on time—noon.

APPENDIX D

Samples of the Three Students' Writing



Peter's Work:

[redacted] [redacted]

[redacted] School

Put was [illegible] were [illegible]

Sentence.

1 Charlie was afraid at the whales.

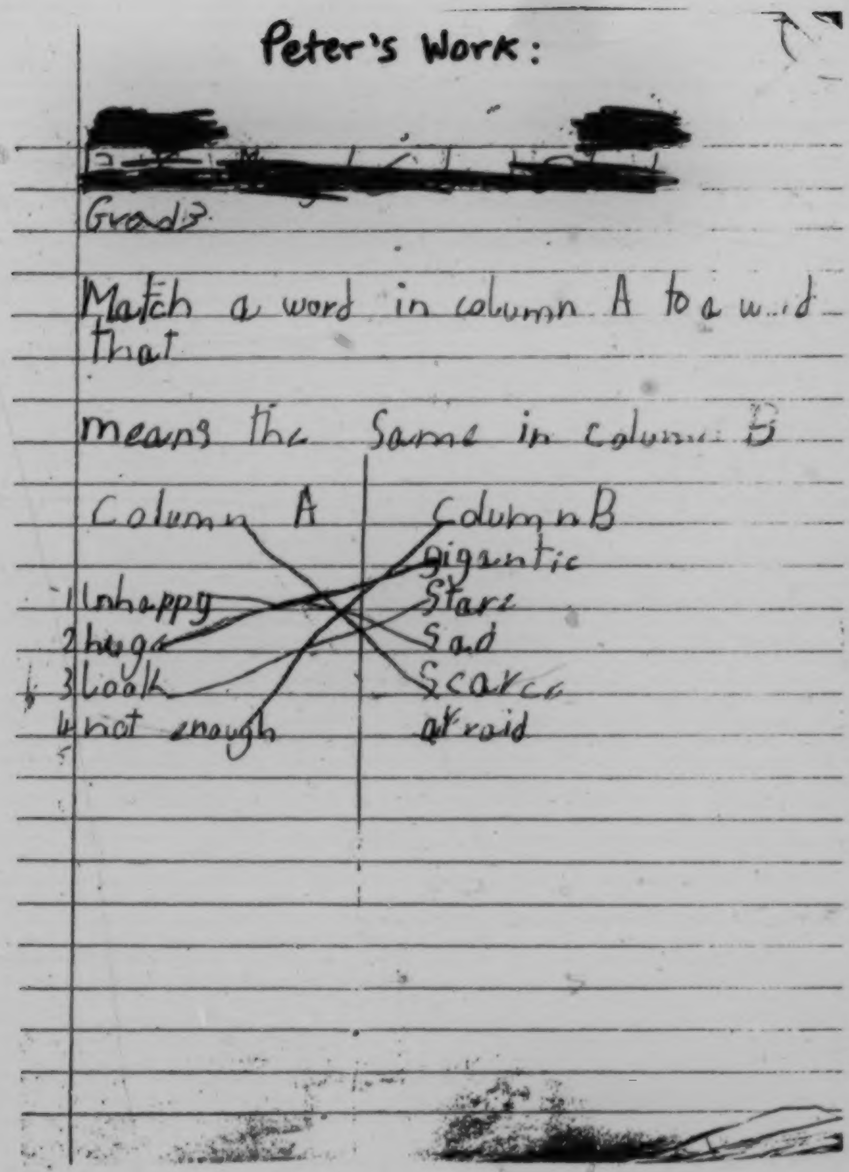
2 The girls were having a pinic.

3 The trees were Swaying in the br

was - The Chiberen

ing

chiberen



Peter's Work:

[redacted]

Grad 3

Match a word in column A to a w..d that

means the Same in colum.. B

Column A	Column B
	gigantic
1 Unhappy	Stare
2 huge	Sad
3 Look	Scarce
4 not enough	afraid
5	

Peter's Writing:

[redacted]
I we My me Mummy
we need nut

James' Writing:

on look at my fish net My brand new lovely.
fish net I am goi... to fish in the rive.
Oneday Dady and Mummy wr on The bus.
One Friday nigel and Mummy was playing.

John's Writing:

[redacted]

the god is dinymarhime.

I Wan ta hoarmeese.

the cat is 'andam-llme.

I me ta Shod.

She boils crushesthe birsn.